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ELFRICA.

Joseph Hill
March 25th
1888

ELFRICA.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

BY

MRS. EDMUND BOGER,

AUTHOR OF 'SOUTHWARK AND ITS STORY.'

'A mighty strong champion of Somerset.'
FULLER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE PASSING OF SIR ALMERIC DE TRISTRAM, AND THE FINDING OF ARTHUR	1
II.	LABOUR AND REST	45
III.	FAILURE—THE UNFINISHED WORK	95
IV.	THE KING'S MESSAGE	123
V.	'L'HOMME PROPOSE MAIS DIEU DISPOSE'	182

ELFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASSING OF SIR ALMERIC DE TRISTRAM, AND THE FINDING OF ARTHUR.

WHILE the King was making his northern tour, Sir John de Courcy and his wife remained at Stoke, awaiting the signal of Richard's crossing to Normandy to go themselves thither. They had planned to bid adieu to their nephew in the Church of St. Mary at Rouen, where had been sworn the vow of perpetual love and friendship so faithfully kept between his father and De Courcy; but from one cause and another the King's stay in

England was prolonged, to the great happiness of the elder Lady de Courcy.

It was late in the autumn that a small body of horsemen were seen coming at a sharp trot from the direction of Bridgewater. A squire of De Briwere headed the party, with two youths by his side. The former, on nearing the Castle, rode forward a little, and said that he brought, by Sir William de Briwere's desire, messengers from Ireland with despatches. At the same time he presented a scroll from the Knight himself. This was, handed immediately to Sir John, before the party dismounted. It contained these words:

'*To my Dear and Well-beloved Friend, Sir John de Courcy.*

'I send you heavy tidings, in which be assured of my sympathy. I have sent on the messengers to tell their own tale, whilst I am making for you such preparations as I think you will desire, that, if you think

good, your return to Ireland may not be delayed.

'These, with my hearty love and condolence, from your assured friend,

'WILLIAM BRIWERE.'

De Courcy read the missive; then, striding to the Castle gate, he saw young Theobald Fitz-Walter and the son of Sir John Savage, who had been taken as pages by Sir Almeric in the place of his own sons, their fathers being absent in England attending the coronation. At once he knew the worst. He greeted the boys in silence, and as they dismounted, led the way into the hall. Then, scarce giving them time to salute the Ladies de Courcy, he, first finding voice to speak, said:

'My lads, let us hear your tidings, be they good or bad, and Heaven give me strength to bear them!'

'Sir,' answered Theobald Fitz-Walter, 'we bear to you a message from Sir Almeric de Tristram. His last words to

us contained a bequest of his heart to you and to your lady; and here, sir, is the heart of the truest gentleman and noblest friend that man ever had.'

The boys now brought forward a small box, which they had guarded with the utmost care, and took from it reverently a heart-shaped case of beaten silver, which Fitz-Walter placed in Sir John's hands. Elfrica rose, and placed herself by her husband's side, for the bequest was to her as well as to him. The great warrior looked stunned and dizzy. She guided him to his chair, and he sat with one hand shading his eyes, the other pressed tenderly on the precious case which lay on his knees.

A dead silence fell on all. Elfrica knelt by her husband's side, with tears streaming from her eyes. Nicholas stood behind his uncle, his head bowed on his arms, which rested on the high-backed chair, and his chest heaving with the sobs he in vain sought to control. Lady de

Courcy sat with her arms around her younger grandsons, who were kneeling by her side, and weeping bitterly.

De Courcy neither moved nor spoke. The two young messengers stood silent and troubled. At last the elder lady said:

'Gentlemen, be seated, and tell us how this sad event has chanced. He, too, was a son of mine, and scarcely less dear than my own.'

'Madame,' said young Fitz-Walter, glad, as it seemed, to break the spell of silence, 'it was after the noble Earl of Ulster and our fathers embarked for England that the news came that there was a slight commotion in Connaught, and we accompanied Sir Almeric de Tristram on an expedition there; it was a matter of little moment, and the slight disturbance was easily quelled. But Cathal O'Connor, who of late had appeared so submissive, seems to have thought that in the absence of Sir John de Courcy and other knights, he might have some chance of recovering

his father's kingdom. He gathered together a mighty army, and lay in wait; and as we were going through the Lacklagh Mountains the foot soldiers, who were in advance, suddenly found themselves almost surrounded by a great force.

'Sir Almeric's band consisted but of thirty knights and two hundred infantry. When the cavalry saw the pass to which we had come, and that the Irish were rapidly closing around us—for they numbered ten thousand men—they cried out that there was still time to escape. Then spoke Sir Almeric's brother, Sir Geoffrey de Tristram, who had but lately joined us; he begged them not to desert their comrades at this pinch. Sir Almeric had ascended a hill, whence he could see around, and he was able to judge that for the infantry there was nothing left but to sell their lives dearly, but that the cavalry might escape if they retreated in time. He came down from his post, and found his brother passionately arguing

with the knights. They said that, could they save the lives of their comrades, they would gladly peril their own; but as that could not be, they could see no reason in throwing their lives away.

'Then Sir Almeric thus addressed them: "'Who will, may save their lives on horseback if they can. But assuredly my heart will not suffer me to leave my poor friends in their necessity, with whom I had rather die in honour than live in dispraise. But to all those who will stand this day I can say no more than this, as our lives shall together depart, so shall my soul accompany with yours to the latter day; and in doing this, I give you all my most humble thanks, and this day will live and die in the field. And, my friends and fellows all, bear witness with me the latter day, that to God I render and yield my soul; my service to my natural Prince; my heart to my brother De Courcy and his wife; my force, might, pain, and goodwill to my poor friends and fellows here.'

'"This he spoke kneeling, and kissing the cross of his sword, thrust it through his horse, saying that he should never serve against them, with whom he had so truly and worthily served afore."'*

As soon as Theobald Fitz-Walter began to repeat his father's own words, Nicholas de Tristram stood erect, and keeping his eyes fixed on the speaker, drank in every word; and as he listened, the varied emotions of pride, love, even joy, chased each other over his face. But when Fitz-Walter paused, he started forward, and said passionately:

'I cannot believe it! He never spoke of his boys—sent no word of love to me! and you—there you stand without scratch or scar—and you left him!'

Again he buried his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud.

The two lads rose and came forward; they bent the knee before De Courcy.

* Burke.

'Sir, say that you believe we are no cravens!'

'You would scarce be your father's sons if you were,' said De Courcy, with an effort.

'We have yet more to say, sir,' said young Savage, taking up the word. 'Sir, when Sir Almeric had spoken, we drew our swords to slay our horses as the others did; but he placed a detaining hand on ours, and said he was willing to die, but not to fall unseen, with no one to bear his last words to those he so dearly loved. We on our part told him, "We would not desert him; that everyone would cry shame on us for leaving him, and that we had far rather die with him." He turned upon us a look of such sweetness and love as will be remembered by us to our dying day. "Do not I know it?" he said. "Ye are brave men's sons, and will, if it please God, live to be brave men yourselves. But your first duty is obedience; and I lay it upon you to save your lives, if so

you may, that you may tell the tale of how I and my comrades fell. Bear my love and blessing to my boys, and bid Nicholas so to live as to be an example to his brothers." He kissed us both, then bade us take our stand on a neighbouring hill, and see how the fight went; and whilst the Irish were engaged with them, to ride for our lives. He blessed us as we knelt, and what *could* we do but obey?'

'You did right, my boys,' said De Courcy; 'and now that Nicholas knows that his father's last thought was for him, he will grieve for his hasty speech.'

'Pardon me, sirs,' said Nicholas, and then hastily left the hall. Elfrica stole after him to comfort him, but she found it too soon to attempt the task. To let his grief have its way, and to listen to and sympathize with his passionate affection for his father, was all the consolation he was capable of receiving then: it was too soon as yet to remind him that the cross

on his shoulder was only a portion of that he had vowed to bear.

The two lads were eagerly questioned so as to make their story clear, and Fitz-Walter told how each man, like the Spartans of old, fell at his post, surrounded by heaps of slain; then they described their own escape, and how they made their way to Sir John Savage, who had by this time returned. It was he who, going with a sufficient force, rescued the body of Sir Almeric, and sent his heart, his last bequest, to Sir John de Courcy.*

A requiem was sung in the chapel that night, but early in the morning everyone was astir. De Courcy was going at once to seek the King, in order to confer with him before he returned to Ireland; he took Nicholas with him, and the two lads

* 'Thus died Sir Almeric de Tristram, who, among a thousand knights, might be chosen for beauty and heroic courage; for humility and courtesy to his inferiors; yielding to none but in the way of gentleness.' —*Quoted by* BURKE.

accompanied him as far as their routes lay together, on their way to Sir Theobald Fitz-Walter to bear the news to him.

De Courcy was heedfully watched by his wife and mother. Elfrica was tenderness itself, but she knew that this bitter blow was beyond even her powers of consolation ; she did not obtrude either her sorrow or her sympathy. But the mother could venture where the wife dared not ; and when he came to bid them adieu, for he had decided to leave Elfrica for a time in Somerset, she said :

'My son, it may well be that we may never meet again ; listen to me, then! Thou hast two natures in thee, thy father's and thy mother's ; and much I fear the spirit thou hast inherited from thy mother triumphing over the gentler and more tender nature thou hast from thy father. Thy life has hitherto been exceptionally blessed, and now, if sorrow comes, if defeat, yea, even what the world calls disgrace, should be your portion, let it not harden or

make you bitter; think of the blessings God has left you in wife and child.'

'And mother, too,' said Elfrica, as she drew near.

Lady de Courcy added: 'Do not forget mercy, my son, in what must necessarily be the stern repression of revolt; but remember One Who shed His own blood for the sake of His murderers.'

De Courcy bowed his head, and answered:

'Mother, it is as if all that was gentle and pure in me were burnt out, and nought left but pride and anger—aye, even revenge itself.'

Elfrica was saying last words to Nicholas, so Lady de Courcy had time to add:

'My son, God has given thee a good angel in thy wife: so pure, so true, so sweet a being, it has never been my lot to see; and believe me, in death as in life, thou shouldest thank God for having given to thee two of His fairest creatures for thy special comfort and delight. The memory

of what has been is in itself a blessing, and must not obliterate the sense of what thou hast left.'

Sir John de Courcy and his nephew departed, and Elfrica strove to relieve the sense of desolation, and to dissipate the fears for her husband's safety, by sweet ministrations of love and care to her child, her husband's mother, and the poor. She talked much, too, to Jordan de Courcy, who was to accompany his brother to Ireland, and assist him in making all necessary arrangements for the summons which he was daily expecting from Sir John, whom he was to join at Bristol with reinforcements.

In ten days Nicholas returned, the King desiring that De Courcy should cross to Ireland at once; he brought the summons to Jordan de Courcy. It was a sad Christmas at Stoke; yet the chaplain tried, and was ably seconded by Elfrica, to make all feel that the joy of the holy season was independent of earthly troubles

and sorrows, and was perhaps the purer for not being mingled with earthly festivity. Yet Elfrica's heart would faint at times, and her tears would come; and she said:

'Ah! dear madame my mother, you bear these trials and separations better than I do.'

'It is natural, my daughter; the greatest, deepest grief of all, the loss of my dear husband, left me this consolation: that no sorrow or grief, save the unworthiness of my children—which, thank God, I have never had to bear—could ever equal it; besides that, every day brings me nearer to the time when I trust to meet those dear ones who have preceded me: it is but natural that your feelings should be keener than mine.'

But though there was little of mirth in the Castle at Stoke, yet around, the Ladies de Courcy strove to promote the Christmas joy by timely gifts to their poor dependents; and the reflection of the happiness they brought was thrown back upon themselves.

But though Elfrica would never say one word in dispraise of her husband's native country, she could not help feeling the difference between the slowness and heaviness of the villeins of Somerset, and the affectionate, quick-witted and impulsive, though unstable, Irish peasantry.

Something, she scarce knew what, made her mother notice the sense of disappointment, and Lady de Courcy said:

'True, my daughter, they lack the keen wit and quaint humour that attracts you in the native Irish; but they are true as steel, and may be trusted to the uttermost.'

Winter had given way to spring, when the call came to join the Royal fleet at Dartmouth, and Sir Henry Percheval summoned his young squire to attend him, each of them receiving in his own parish church the pilgrim's staff and scrip before he set out.

It is hard for any of us to say, in any work we may undertake, how far our motives are pure and unmixed, and our

intentions single-minded; but there can be no doubt that love of adventure and enterprise drew at least as many to the holy wars as religious enthusiasm. Whether statecraft and policy and a desire to stem this last Eastern wave of population which threatened to break over Europe once more, as had happened in the fifth century, had anything to do with it, one can scarcely say; but certain it is that it was 'the Eastern Question' that stirred Christendom in the twelfth century, as much as it has done in the nineteenth, and roused Europe to pour its legions into Asia, and bring back as its spoils new ideas, new learning, and new science.

But it is doubtful how far the Ladies de Courcy troubled themselves about these matters, or the why and the wherefore of what was going on in the world. People took things very literally in those days; their sons and husbands and brothers were soldiers—they were sent into the world to fight, and fight they did; and when they

could fight for God and His Church, that seemed best of all. So loving prayers were wafted heavenwards, and loving thoughts and blessings were wafted eastwards and westwards from the quiet home in Somerset.

Sir William Briwere, in spite of his multifarious occupations and important State duties, found time to keep the family at Stoke well informed of what was going on in the world. King Richard had made his brother John, and his half-brother Geoffrey, Archbishop of York, swear not to enter England in his absence; this prohibition he had foolishly withdrawn before he left. Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, having accompanied the King on his expedition to the Holy Land, it came to pass that Longchamps, Bishop of Ely, Chancellor, Justiciar and Pope's Legate, engrossed in his own person the whole authority, as well secular as spiritual, in the State. He, though personally loyal to Richard, affected almost regal state, and

exacting money by every possible means, enriched his own family by disposing of the hands of wealthy wards in marriage to his relations.

As long as Eleanor, the Queen Dowager, was in England, Longchamps was able to retain his position; but when she departed for Sicily with Richard's bride, the nobles rose, John placed himself at their head, and there was every appearance of a civil war between the separate factions of the Prince and the Bishop. Messengers had been sent to Richard, informing him of the critical state of affairs. He sent Walter of Coutances, Bishop of Rouen, from Messina with documents signed by his own hand, appointing him supreme Justiciar, with William Marshall, Geoffrey Fitz-Peter, Hugh Bardolf, and William Briwere as coadjutors.* Longchamps had to fly the country disguised as a woman; but John's apparent victory was indeed a defeat.

De Briwere was too busy and too much

* Stubbs' 'Constitutional History.'

engrossed with politics to be able to spare time to visit Stoke; but he sent a sure messenger telling them that, if for no other reason, he was thankful to have been invested with power so as to be able to watch over their safety and comfort. He let them know also that all was going on well in Ireland; and although it was more than suspected that Walter and Hugh de Lacy had encouraged, if not taken part in, the attempt of Cathal O'Connor, yet as they disavowed it, and submitted to De Courcy, he had at any rate appeared to trust them; affairs were now coming into order, and De Courcy hoped shortly to be able to return and take his wife back with him.

Spring had come again before De Courcy was able to return. He came at last, a graver, sadder man; middle age was stamped on his brow. He left Ireland in perfect subjection. Sir John Savage commanded in Ulster in his absence, with Sir Stephen de Burgos as his lieutenant;

while Sir Theobald Fitz-Walter seemed not to be able to do enough to show his gratitude for the heedful care Sir Almeric had taken of his only son and heir.* De Courcy had hastened his return, for he found that he could not remain in Ireland without Elfrica. His whole soul had been so rent by the loss of his friend and brother, that at first it seemed unable to hold any other sensation than grief for him; but in Ireland was borne in upon him the conviction that the sore wound could only be healed by the ministrations of his gentle wife, and, as soon as he could be spared, his first thought was to hasten home and fetch her.

'Had it not been for my mother,' he said to her, 'I should have sent for you ere this; but, as it was, I came.'

The expedition to France was given up, but De Briwere would not be denied their

* Sir Theobald Fitz-Walter's son assumed the name of Butler from his hereditary office. He was the ancestor of the house of Ormond.

paying him a visit in his quaint old home at Ile de Briwere. By the influence of Prince John he had married the beautiful Beatrix de Valle, a near relation of the royal family. De Briwere was a man fitted to win a lady's love, and his wife, a proud Norman beauty, was faithfully attached to him, and willing to yield to his whim of receiving his old friend in his comparatively humble residence in the marsh-lands of Somerset, but dear to him as the first possession he had been able to call his own. Lady De Briwere might have been a model for a Juno, but she was fairly bewitched by the sweet graciousness of the Princess of Man; and whilst the Earl of Ulster and his friend wandered from reminiscences of old to affairs of State, the two ladies interchanged confidences with regard to their various homes in Normandy and Norway, Cornwall and the Isle of Man, England and Ireland, Somerset and Doune; and it may be that stories of their husbands' astuteness

in politics and prowess in war were not wanting.

De Courcy could with truth congratulate his old friend on his marriage, and declared that he would bear it in mind as a good deed to place against Prince John's many villainies.

'Ah, John!' said De Briwere, 'you think that I love intrigue; but, indeed, mine is no enviable lot. My marriage, I thank God, is a happy one; but it will introduce me to fresh complications. And this new appointment from the King causes me anxiety and trouble enough, and yet I believe I am doing my duty. I am, perhaps, the only man living who has been equally a friend of the late King, the present one, and Prince John. I would fain not be misjudged by you. I could envy you, John, your bold independence, going straight on, turning neither to the right hand nor the left; whereas my duty —for duty I believe it to be, or, believe me, John,' and his voice pleaded with

almost pathetic earnestness, 'I would not do it—will be to sway from side to side, in order to fulfil my duty to the King, by endeavouring to hold the balance between the King's representatives and Prince John, and use my influence with him to prevent his committing any overt act of rebellion.'

De Courcy could not forbear muttering between his teeth:

'The cur! Why was he ever allowed to return to England?'

'It was against my advice,' said De Briwere. 'But I believe the King in his own mind seeks to atone for his rebellion against his father by lavish kindness to his only remaining brother; and, John, I ask you, by the memory of our old friendship, by the remembrance of all your good offices to me as a little lad, not to misdoubt me, but to believe that your old friend is striving to keep the straight path, though the course may at times be a devious one.'

John grasped Will's hand, and understood him better than he had for many a long year.

De Courcy could not linger in Somerset, but he was enabled to leave his mother with more comfort than he expected. Baldwin de Redvers, Earl of Devon and Wight, having died within the year, his sister Alice was left a childless widow; and being still young, it seemed a natural arrangement that she should make her home with her aged mother.

But before leaving Stoke, came an earnest invitation from the Abbot of Glastonbury, entreating Sir John de Courcy to be present at the search that was about to be made for Arthur's grave. 'It was desirable on all accounts,' said the Abbot's messenger, 'that credible witnesses should be present, so that in case of any discovery being made, no doubt might remain in ages yet to come with regard to Arthur and his burial at Glastonbury.'

De Courcy was uncertain whether or

not to accept the invitation. Glastonbury under its new *régime* was distasteful to him; but Elfrica looked so entreatingly that he could not but consent: and as Elfrica was specially invited, they set out with their son and nephews and a small number of attendants.

As they approached the isle of Avalon, they met others bound on the same errand. Bishops and priests, monks and laymen, were wending their way to the sacred spot, hallowed by ages of historic and legendary story.

Having entered within the precincts, they were conducted at once to the Lord Abbot's lodgings, and were received in the great hall by Henry de Soliaco, the Abbot, a young and not over-reverend ecclesiastic. He was attired, of course, in the dress of his order, but contrived to show as much foppery and as little gravity as were at all consistent with his profession.

When all the guests had arrived, the

Abbot addressed them. He told them that his uncle, the late King, had laid upon him the duty of searching for Arthur's grave. That in the year 1171, when in Pembroke, being received with great honour by the Welsh Princes, the bards had sung to him wondrous tales of their great King, and of all his mighty achievements. How that, after winning twelve great battles against the Saxons, he fell at last fighting against his own subjects. Then, after receiving his death-wounds, he was placed by the hands of fairies in a barge and brought to Glastonbury, and there laid to rest; but that the place had been kept a profound secret till now, lest the Saxons should do dishonour to the great hero's remains. The knowledge, therefore, was only imparted to three: one a monk of Glastonbury, and two others belonging to some religious community in Wales, whose duty it was to hand the secret in succession to others; but though the existence of such a secret

was known, none could guess in whose possession it was.

But now that the Saxons no longer ruled the land, and all races alike did honour to Arthur's memory, there was no reason that the secret should be longer kept; and to-day, therefore, they were to make a reverent search for his bones, prepared to do honour to the memory of the Christian soldier who fought for his God, his Church, and his country, against infidel and savage invaders.

Then the Abbot turned to Giraldus Cambrensis, who, seated amongst a crowd of monks, had not before been recognised by De Courcy.

'Brother Giraldus,' said the Abbot, 'it is you who can point out to us where we should search for the remains of the blameless King.'

'My Lord Abbot,' answered Giraldus, 'I have already, with your permission, marked the place where the workmen you have commanded to be present should

search. The unfailing tradition has been handed down for a period of six hundred years, and I am at this present time one of the three to whom the secret has been confided; who the other two may be I know not. You are aware that though on my father's side I am of Norman blood, on my mother's I am descended from the ancient Princes of Britain; you may suppose, therefore, how earnestly I join in the hope and sincere belief that the facts connected with Arthur's life and death, his victories and his last resting-place, may be established to-day beyond the power of scoffers to deny or disprove.

'The legend of Arthur's mysterious birth belongs to Cornwall, as, thank Heaven, does the shame of the rebellion that overthrew him; but to this land of Somerset belongs the honour of having stood as a bulwark and defence against the heathen hordes that overwhelmed the land, and well-nigh crushed out our holy faith and

our civilization alike. It was from Camelot that went out the brave knights who stemmed the raging torrent, and, as long as Arthur lived, Somerset was virgin soil; nor did our holy fane pass into Saxon hands till they themselves had embraced the true faith, so that conqueror and conquered knelt together by St. Joseph's sacred shrine. It was fitting that the body of the great King should be confided to the care of the land that he had defended so bravely. To-day, then, we consecrate to the search for the remains of this noble British hero and his wife Guinevere.'

'Scarcely, brother,' said the Abbot, 'is it likely that the body of the sinful Guinevere would be found in holy ground, laid by the side of her outraged lord.'

'Pardon me, my Lord, tradition is precise upon the point. Before Arthur's last battle, Guinevere, deeply penitent for her sin, prostrate at his feet, with her golden hair sweeping the pavement, ob-

tained his pardon; then, taking the veil at Amesbury, she there died, but left a charge that she should be buried at her lord's feet at Glastonbury.'

The Abbot courteously thanked Giraldus for the interesting account he had given them of one whose fame, however, he said, was by no means confined to his own country. He was then proposing that the visitors should accompany him to the scene of the search, when from among the monks rose—one, the most aged of their number, feeble in power, and with a trembling voice.

'Father,' said the old man, 'is it permitted me to speak?'

The Abbot looked astonished, and asked who addressed him. Then said the Prior:

'It is old Brother Morgan, my Lord. He is blind and deaf, but he has been strangely affected by the search for King Arthur's bones, of which in some way he hath gained knowledge.'

'Speak, brother,' said the Lord Abbot.

'Brother Giraldus hath, as I gather,' said the aged monk, 'made known the spot where lie the bones of the glorious King Arthur and his wife. It is now eighty years since I, the youngest monk of Avalon, was summoned to the deathbed of Father Caradoc; and then, when I had taken the oath on the blessed Rood not to betray what he would confide to me, he told me that Arthur's grave was between the pyramids at the entrance to the Abbey. Then he bade me tell the secret to no one—unless I myself were dying—until Norman had ceased to fight with Norman and there was no chance of the return of the Saxons to govern the land. I part with the trust that I have held now for eighty years, and this day shall I know that Briton, Saxon, and Norman alike honour my country's greatest King and hero.'

The Abbot bade the young monk, whose duty it was to wait on the old man, to

thank him for confirming what Brother Giraldus had made known, and invite him to come out and be witness, in as far as he could, to the prosecution of the search. All made way as the venerable old monk —leaning on his staff, with his other hand resting on the shoulder of the young brother—passed out, unconscious of the crowd of dignitaries who delayed that they might not hurry his feeble steps. Then out streamed the guests, Sir John de Courcy recognising and claiming acquaintance with Giraldus as the assembly broke up.

The scene that presented itself as they passed out was worthy of a painter. St. Joseph's Chapel, as we must needs call it, was then fresh from the hands of architect and sculptor. It is of the late Norman or transition period. Fair, and white, and glistening it shone in the spring sunshine. It is entirely built of the beautiful Bath stone, whose quarries of white oolite have been worked now for well-nigh two thousand years. Eastward of it, the

ground was marked out for the larger edifice, to which it was to serve as a galilee or porch (an arrangement which may at this day be seen at Durham and at Ely Cathedrals). Large stones prepared for the building lay on the greensward, and a disused crane waited for the promise of King Henry to be redeemed, he having laid upon himself and his successors the burden of its restoration to its former magnificence in the days of Abbot Henry of Blois; but Richard had been too much engrossed with his Crusade to think of redeeming his father's pledge. As a background to the buildings were the orchards, with their white and pink blossoms, fair and fleeting as the exquisite flush on a young girl's cheek, while in the distance could be seen the Tor, with St. Michael's tower crowning its steep ascent.

In the Abbey churchyard were the two sculptured pyramids, between which were the labourers at work, under the vigilant eye of an elderly lay-brother, whilst around

stood numerous dependents of the Abbey; and beyond, towards the town of Glastonbury, the ground was fringed with a curious crowd of townspeople eagerly gaping at the labourers at work, though scarce able to see what was going on. A messenger had just been sent to summon the Abbot and his visitors, and the stately assemblage poured out, and added colour, life, and motion to the picture. A large, sculptured stone had just been raised, on the lower side of which was fastened a leaden cross of rough workmanship. It had been fastened to the stone by screws, but they had rusted away. On the side of the cross facing the stone were stamped irregular letters.

The cross was handed to the Abbot, but after puzzling his eyes over it for a little while, he handed it to Giraldus, saying:

'Brother, you are more accustomed to studying ancient inscriptions than I.'

Every eye was turned curiously upon the learned monk, as they waited to hear

what this strange message from the dead might be. He reverently took the cross, carefully brushed away the earth that filled up the letters, and heedfully tracing out the curious crooked marks that did duty for words with his finger, his face gradually lighted up, as letter by letter the legend became plain to his eyes and his understanding. At last he looked up, and said joyously:

'It is—it is, my Lord, what we have been seeking! Listen all, and hear what this inscription saith.'

Every sound was hushed; even the workmen rested upon their mattocks and gazed. All the dreaminess was gone from the old monk's face; his eye sparkled and his voice rang out clearly, as he read the words:

'Hic jacet sepultus inclitus Rex Arthurius
in Insula Avaloniâ.'

'Here lies buried the renowned King Arthur
in the Isle of Avalon,'

was added by the Abbot in a deep,

melodious voice, though with a foreign accent.

For a moment every head was bared, and then out rang an English cheer from all present.

'And,' said the Abbot, 'let a "Te Deum" be sung, and the bells be rung; and to you, my good fellows, shall some comforting cheer be sent to rejoice your hearts, and double pay shall be given to all who have laboured here to-day. But while we give thanks, do you continue your search.'

Watch and ward was set. The diggers, after partaking of Somerset fare—bread and cheese and good convent cider—returned to work again with redoubled zeal.

The 'Te Deum' was added to the noontide office. John de Courcy once more knelt for prayer and stood for praise, where, as a little lad, he had so often worshipped; but he felt like the old men at the building of the second temple, when they found that the glory of the Shekinah had for ever departed. The Vetusta

Ecclesia, the ancient wattled church raised by the same hands that had laid the Lord's body in his sepulchre, was gone. It is true St. David's sapphire altar was still there, but the eyes that had discovered it, the hands that had so lavishly adorned it, were no longer there; and this polished young princeling Abbot was but a poor representative of the venerable guardian of his youth, the Abbot Henry of Blois.

How strange it all seemed! He closed his eyes, he was once more a boy, awe-struck and wondering at the glories of the sanctuary; he opened them, he was Sir John de Courcy, Lord of Ulster, and, as his hand rested on the shoulder of his boy, he saw in that part of the church set apart for women, his Elfrica with eyes brimming over with highly wrought feeling and reverent emotion. But the glorious strains of the 'Te Deum' lifted his soul above, and he was joining with saints and angels and the wise and good of all ages in worship of the Most High; nay, he almost fancied

that he could distinguish, in the echoes of the exquisite notes of the choir, the voice of his sister and his most dearly loved friend.

The service was over, the crowd of gazers gradually went off, some of the visitors spoke of going, but De Courcy would remain to see the result of the search; and seeing the labourers still at work, he strolled with Elfrica and the boys to St. Michael's Tor. He pointed out the fields where he had played, and the orchards which the boys had robbed; and then Elfrica told Miles, with loving pride, the story of his father being put in penitence for trying to save little Will Briwere from a flogging.

'Ah! then,' said Miles, 'that is why Sir William Briwere told me that he trusted I should be as good and brave a boy, and live to grow up as noble and wise a knight, as my father. If I must come to school in England, may I come to Glastonbury, so that I may be like you, father?'

'No, my boy; I cannot give you all my reasons, but when I was at Glastonbury I was near my mother, and at Chester you would not be so far away from us as here.'

Just then the horn, the appointed signal, was heard, and they hastened back to the Abbey.

They found that the workmen had uncovered the huge trunk of a tree, the upper part was movable, and they were busily engaged, by the help of cranes, in raising the whole together. It was a work of great difficulty; but while this was being done, a second and smaller trunk was discovered lying at the foot of the first. On opening the larger one, bones were found in it of gigantic size, and in the skull were discovered ten wounds, making it no wonder that Arthur had succumbed to the injuries received in his last battle. Reverently they gazed, and as De Courcy looked at limbs which almost surpassed his own in size:

'We see here,' he said, 'to what we must all come.'

'Ah! but,' answered Elfrica quickly, 'not fighting against our own people.'

'I know not,' he said sadly. 'Our Lord was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all; and what are we, that we should expect a better fate?'

And now the second wooden coffin was raised, and laid by the side of the other.

They pressed forward to look, and there were to be seen the bones and dust of another form. Over the small skull, and half concealing the dust, lay a tress of golden hair, shining in the light of the evening sun. Elfrica, much moved by her Lord's last words, knelt by the remains of the penitent Queen, who had once been as fair as herself, and placing her slender fingers under the golden threads of hair, she raised the tress. For a moment it was seen by all, then a light shiver ran through it, and it, too, had passed into dust.

The golden locks that had swept the

dust at Amesbury, when her Lord bade her his last farewell, had done their work; they had borne witness to the truth of the legend, to the sincerity of her repentance, and now, having told their tale, had passed into dust again.

Elfrica bowed her head in her hands and wept.

'My darling,' said her husband as he raised her, 'if Arthur's fate were to be mine, you could never be Guinevere.'

They were glad the 'Te Deum' had been already sung; it would scarcely have suited their feelings now.

It was soon resolved by the Abbot and those present that a magnificent tomb should be raised over Arthur's remains, and that Guinevere's should be laid as they found them, at his feet. De Courcy and Elfrica passed the night at the Pilgrim's Inn, and leaving a rich offering at the morning mass, returned to Stoke.

But now they must hasten their departure for Ireland. Gravely and tenderly did the

Lady de Courcy part from her son. She bade him God speed; she told him how blessed he was to have a noble work to do, and still more to have such a helpmeet in it. She commended them to each other and to God: and as she blessed them, she told them she could never hope to see them again in this life.

'Somerset, my son, can scarce be your home again, but I shall hear of you; and for me, the best news you can have will be, that I am laid by your father's side in peace.'

She blessed them as first De Courcy and his wife, and then her grandsons, knelt before her.

On their homeward way they paid their long-promised visit to Sir Damian de Lacy and the Lady Eveline, and Elfrica was rejoiced to find the heroine of the Garde Douloureuse worthy of the love and self-devotion that both Sir Hugh de Lacy and his nephew had shown. Miles was placed under the charge of the black monks of

St. Werburg, at Chester, a strict and well-ordered monastery, where good discipline was observed, and learning and gentle culture carefully taught and practised. At Chester, as at Glastonbury, De Courcy purchased richly illuminated service books. A copy of the whole Bible was obtained as a gift to St. Patrick's Cathedral. For the monastery of Inis-Courcy he had procured the ancient histories by Orosius and the Pastoral of St. Gregory ; while Elfrica had ordered a copy of the four Gospels, splendidly illuminated and magnificently bound, as well as the treatise of Adhelmus 'De Laude Virginitatis,' in readiness for the convent she was about to found.

Saddened though Elfrica was at parting with her boy, her energetic spirit rose at being once more at home, and able again to work with and for her husband.

CHAPTER II.

LABOUR AND REST.

The return of the Earl and Countess of Ulster was to be made the opportunity for a grand state ceremonial of great splendour. There was to be a gathering of the clans, and the oath of homage was to be taken to King Richard, De Courcy receiving their vows of allegiance as the King's representative. The chieftains were desired to wear their torques and chains of gold, whilst De Courcy and Elfrica sat in state. To give the whole a more imposing aspect, the Norman barons were requested to attend; but when the De Lacies were summoned, with the chieftains of Meath, they replied that having already paid their

homage to the King himself, there was no need that they should attend, and that the barons and chiefs of Meath held from them, and not directly from the King. This was true enough, though as a matter both of courtesy and policy the point should have been yielded.

After the homage had been paid, High Mass and a 'Te Deum' followed in the Cathedral, De Courcy and all present appearing in their robes of state, and the whole was closed with a magnificent banquet, when each was seated according to his rank, and cheerfulness and good order prevailed. It was the same ceremonial that had been arranged when Prince John came to Ireland, but this time all passed off satisfactorily. After the banquet the hall was cleared for dancing, and the grave courtesy of De Courcy, combined with the winning sweetness of Elfrica, subdued or won all hearts.

On the morrow, when the guests had all departed, and the evening meal was over,

the usual gathering round the great fire in the hall took place, and Sir John Savage and Sir Bertram congratulated De Courcy on the perfect success of the ceremonial. He was leaning back in his chair, looking wearied and grave, but he answered:

'I am thankful indeed that all has gone so well, but do not, one of you, think for a moment that all this fair seeming is to be depended on. Each one of these would resist our authority to-morrow, if the occasion offered; yet each knows full well that if the strong arm that keeps them in subjection were withdrawn, their hands would be immediately at each other's throats. There can be no personal loyalty to a King they have never seen; and as long as we are liable to be withdrawn, and our whole policy reversed, at a word from England, the government will be unstable, and the people utterly wanting in loyalty.'

'But,' said the chaplain, 'when the King returns from the holy wars, we will hope

that he will pay more attention to Irish affairs.'

'When?' echoed De Courcy. 'Heaven forgive me! if I err, yet to a plain man like myself, the leaving one's kingdom and one's duties to others, to go out into the wilderness and follow wandering fires, seems but like the idle quest of the Sangreal which broke up the noble fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table.'

He looked so sad and depressed that they cared not to argue the matter; and Sir Bertram, willing to change the subject, remarked that the Lady de Courcy had not favoured them with a lay or legend since her return.

'Oh! Sir Bertram,' she said gaily, 'you have not heard the new romances that I have learned of the blameless King, nor have we told you of the finding the bones of Arthur and Guinevere.'

'Nor of this silly one's tears,' said De Courcy, 'when the golden tresses fell to dust.'

'Was that indeed truth, my Lord?'

'Indeed it was, for a moment the evening sun shone on the threads of golden hair, and then — they faded into nothingness.'

'And so it is,' said the chaplain, 'when aught of this world is touched by the heavenly beam.'

'Nay, Father,' said Elfrica; 'the flowers glow the more brightly when the sunbeam rests upon them, and the mirror flashes back the brilliant light which it receives.'

'True,' said Father Ulric; 'yet what is earthly power or state but an aping of the honour of the Most High?'

'Truly so, Father, if it *be* aping; but if these outward symbols be used the better to do God's work on earth, then the ruler is God's vicegerent, and while he encourages the right and redresses wrongs, his dignity and power represent the Almighty's rule, and his state is a dim reflection of the glory above.'

'Beauty is but skin-deep,' said Father Ulric with a smile, for he liked to draw out the Lady Elfrica.

'It soon perishes, but what a power it is while it lasts! See, Father, even in the Holy Book how the beauty of Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, of Joseph and of Saul and David, are dwelt upon—yea, and Esther's too, who thought no wrong by the use she made of hers to save her people from destruction. Father, I believe this world is made so fair that we may rejoice in its beauty; but it is fleeting that we may not rest in it, but may seek the glories above, of which the fair things on earth are but faint shadows.'

'Sweet lady,' said the chaplain, 'you preach better than I do.'

'Forgive me, Father, if I am presumptuous, but I do wish, at times, that our teachers would follow our blessed Lord's example in making the contemplation of things earthly lead us to the more earnest desire for things heavenly. Surely our joys

here "are gleams from a better world brightening as it grows nearer."'

De Courcy looked at her for a moment as if half alarmed; then he said:

'If we loved this fair land that God has given to us as we ought, we should, I think, endeavour our very utmost to make it worthy of Him.'

It was not often or for long that the whole party were so peacefully gathered together at Doune. Sir John de Courcy and his knights had to be in all parts of the country at once—and terribly was the loss of his dear friend and companion-in-arms borne in upon him at every moment. And though Jordan de Courcy strove his best to supply Sir Almeric's place, there was neither the age—for De Tristram had been some years older than De Courcy—nor the long and intimate companionship and past experience which enabled each to divine unspoken the other's will.

But now came heavy tidings, both public and domestic. Word was brought

of the captivity and subsequent disappearance of the King, and from Somerset news came of the death of the Lady de Courcy. She fell asleep thankfully and tranquilly, tended to the last by the loving care of her widowed daughter. Alice, as Countess of Devon and Wight, was well dowered, and she proposed at once returning to Devon, and living there in her dower-house. Great sorrow and anxiety were caused by these events—for not only was De Courcy a most loving son, and personally attached to Richard, but he also divined that John's treacherous plotting would now meet with but little opposition, while anxiety for his sister's safety and comfort was added to his other troubles.

There was a great desire for further news. Jordan de Courcy paid a hurried visit to England, but finding his sister already preparing to return to Devonshire, and everything apparently quiet, he made but a short stay, as he could ill be spared. Some anxious months passed, but at last

came an accredited messenger from Queen Eleanor and the Government, requesting contributions for the King's ransom. Sir Thomas Mohun, Lord of Dunster, formerly a ward of Sir William Briwere, who had been in the Holy Land with Richard, brought despatches from De Briwere. They said that certain news had come of the place of the King's confinement—that the money for his ransom was being collected, and that Sir William himself was to travel in charge of it, and bring home the King.

Sir Thomas was eagerly beset with questions concerning the Crusades, the country of Palestine, and the King's captivity. That our hero King was a prisoner, and Jerusalem not delivered, was a sad end to the enthusiasm which had sent him out, and grievous had been the expenditure of life and treasure.

'And no result,' said De Courcy.

'Nay, I say not that,' said Sir Thomas; 'from the Saracens, those who would, have learned much.'

'From the black infidels?' said De Courcy.

'Nay, not so black either,' said Sir Thomas, laughing. 'There is no more courteous gentleman living than Saladin himself, and the learning of these Saracens may well put us to shame. Then, too, though their religion is false and corrupt, yet they worship one God only, and abhor idolatry. Their sacred book, the Koran, has many a pearl of great worth amongst the refuse. One saying, which was quoted by a messenger from Saladin to King Richard, struck me much—and it has rested on my mind as a refrain of song ever since. It might well be a Christian maxim: "The day is short, and work is great; the reward also is great, and the Master presses. It is not incumbent upon thee to complete thy work, but thou must not therefore cease from it." '*

* Quoted at the Medical Congress, 1881, by Dr. Billings, of the United States Army.

The author has to confess that, quoting from

'That is indeed a pearl of worth,' said De Courcy; and he murmured the words to himself, as if to fix them in his mind.

But Elfrica could not but notice that though Sir Thomas Mohun gave with alacrity any information or answered any questions with regard to the Crusades, yet if the conversation touched upon home affairs, he spoke with great reserve, and if Somerset, his own county, were mentioned, immediately turned the conversation into another channel. De Courcy must, almost unnoticed by himself, have received the same impression, for he followed De Mohun's lead, and asked scarce any questions with regard to home affairs.

But when the party were separating for the night De Courcy detained Sir Thomas, desiring to know something more definite with regard to the state of England—

memory, she attributed the passage to the Koran; but after finishing the tale and seeking to verify it, found she had made a blunder by substituting the Koran for the Talmud.

and Somerset in particular. The account was anything but reassuring. Deeds of violence and savagery prevailed. Prince John was now plotting openly against his brother's return, and it was a common thing to seize on the persons of heiresses or well-dowered widows, and bestow them forcibly in marriage on one or another of the Prince's dissolute companions. De Courcy listened anxiously.

'Know you aught of the Countess of Devon, my sister?'

De Mohun hesitated.

'Speak, man!' said De Courcy. 'Ill news is not the better for keeping. She sent me word that she returned to Devonshire at once after my mother's death.'

'She did,' said De Mohun.

'Know you how you are torturing me? Is she, too, dead?'

'She lives, and——'

'Well?'

'And—has married again.'

'Married again! and her husband scarce

cold in his grave! Leave us, Elfrica! This is not for your ears.'

'Now then,' said De Courcy, standing as a brave man might to receive the mortal blow, 'tell me all at once—the worst! Whom has she married?'

'Falkes de Breauté.'

'Falkes de Breauté! Alice, my sister, to consent to be the wife of so double-dyed a scoundrel as De Breauté!'

'I said not that she *consented*,' said the young man, seeing that it was better to tell all the shameful tale at once. 'Indeed, my Lord, I scarce know how to put it into words. It was for this that Sir William Briwere bade me come. The asking for contributions for the King's ransom was but the pretext. Prince John is carrying on the most scandalous intrigues against the King; he has gathered around him the most dissolute and reckless of the nobles, and bribes them to his faction by bestowing on them rich heiresses. No sooner was De Redvers dead than he began his in-

trigues. He bought over the servants of the Countess of Devon; but as long as the Lady de Courcy lived, and she was in Somerset, the careful watch that Sir William kept as Sheriff of Somerset prevented his carrying out his purpose. But when your mother was laid in her grave, and she, your sister, had returned to Plympton, by the contrivance of her attendants, who were bribed or threatened, De Breauté introduced himself into the Castle, and gained possession of her person.'

'My God!' groaned De Courcy, 'why didst not Thou strike her dead?'

'Sir William Briwere grieved bitterly; but not only has he no special authority in Devon, but he thought her safe amongst her husband's vassals—and, moreover, Prince John managed to keep him employed elsewhere while this knavery was going on.'

'I see, I see,' said De Courcy. 'Briwere, with his love of finesse and intrigue, divines this rascal's devilry, and has counter-

plotted, and been outwitted; whereas, had he spoken out like a man, and warned my sister, or let me know, it might have been prevented.'

'Blame him not,' said De Mohun, who, like almost everyone who had to do with De Briwere, was tenderly attached to his former guardian; 'he acted as he believed for the best.'

'But now I would fain know the worst. Art sure she is married? I would almost rather not.'

'Yes,' said De Mohun, 'he made sure of that, and bore her off at once to Stoke Courcy.'

'To my father's and my mother's home! He! May the curse of Heaven light upon him and his——! God forgive me, I know not what I say.'

And the strong man bowed his head upon his hands, and seemed almost convulsed with grief and shame. Sir Thomas Mohun knew not how to deal with such a passion of grief; but seeing a light gleam in

the passage, he stepped to the door, and saw Elfrica, who had just returned from the chapel, and was hovering about.

'Dear Lady,' he said, 'you will be your Lord's best comfort.'

And he closed the door upon the husband and wife.

It was a terrible blow to De Courcy. Never before had shame touched his line. Descended from Charlemagne himself, through Charles Duke of Lorraine, son of Louis IV. of France, he could point with pardonable pride to an unspotted lineage. Painfully and proudly did he struggle to hide the crushing nature of the blow; but when De Mohun came on the morrow to bid him farewell, and thank him for his hospitality, he recognised the effects of his tidings in the deepened lines of care and sorrow that were marked on De Courcy's brow.

In return to the question whether he could be of service in bearing any commission to England, he gave him a letter

to De Briwere, written by his own hand.

'I will ask you,' he said, 'to deliver this to De Briwere yourself. We are both convent-bred, and I prefer to say myself to him what I must say, and I would fain hear from him at times how things go.'

The evident sympathy and concern of the young Knight at the effect of his evil tidings touched De Courcy, and he bade him adieu cordially, and when the young man said:

'I fear me, my name will ever have an ill sound in your ears,' he answered quickly:

'Nay, I will but remember your kindliness and goodwill.'

De Courcy watched him as he rode away, and said in a low tone to himself:

'"And now to work, for the day is short, and the Master presses."'

Elfrica added in her low, sweet voice:

'"The reward also is great." Dear my Lord, let us keep the reward in view.'

'Nay, nay; I do not work for hire, but for the Master. "The Master presses."'

This fresh sorrow perhaps changed De Courcy more than any that had hitherto befallen him. The gravity which had grown with his years became more settled; his smile, always rare, was now scarce ever seen: yet he was courteous to all who approached him, and to Elfrica the same tender, loving husband as ever.

They had good accounts of their boy at Chester, whom sometimes they visited, and who often came to visit them. It was becoming time for him to be placed in some knight's household. The boy earnestly sought to be under his father, but though Elfrica looked with entreating eyes, she said not one word, for she knew that her husband thought both England and Ireland bad schools for chivalry at this time. It was decided at last to ask Sir Damian de Lacy to receive him as page into his well-ordered family; and under the charge of Sir Damian and the

Lady Eveline they knew he would have wise training and good culture.

De Courcy himself took him, and solemnly confided him to their charge, begging that as soon as he was old enough, he should be entrusted to some worthy knight who was serving in France; and then when he had won his spurs there, he might look forward to having his help in Ireland.

Whilst De Courcy was at Garde Douloureuse, news was brought of the King's return. He decided at once to go on to Winchester, and be present at Richard's second coronation. He would then also be able to have speech of De Briwere, and learn how things went in Somerset. He found that De Briwere, in spite of having been entrusted with the charge of carrying the King's ransom, was not in much favour at Court, as he was supposed to have leaned too much to the side of John in the King's absence, and he had to ransom his sheriffdom of Somerset

by paying a heavy fine; but there is no reason to suppose that this was otherwise than an excuse for extracting money, for Richard's only interest in England appeared to be to use it as a means for extorting funds for his wars and his pleasures abroad. Nevertheless, De Briwere's marriage with a scion of the royal family, his tact, his energy, the marvellous way in which he had improved all the property that he was connected with, either personally or locally, his influence with all parties, and, in spite of the King's suspicions, his unswerving fidelity, made him a person of great importance. And De Courcy, though wondering at, and in his heart perhaps despising that very sweetness and pliability which had made him his darling when they were boys, could find no cause of complaint; but there was, in spite of himself, a feeling of unreliability which is fatal to true friendship: and each time they met they seemed to drift more and more widely apart, and it

appeared to John that their friendship was rather a memory of the past than a present living fact. De Courcy was the embodiment of his proud motto, 'Vincit omnia veritas;' but he had yet to realize the fact that truth conquers by suffering, and that life was won by death.

With regard to King Richard, the feeling of disappointment was even greater. De Courcy had hoped so much from his return, he had trusted so entirely that order and good government would be restored, that to find that Richard looked upon England as a source only from which to drain money, and paid little heed to England in comparison with his French possessions, and none whatever to Ireland and its wants, sorely depressed him. Finding that, as far as he could gather, De Breauté was not ill-treating his wife, he did not care to denounce him to the King; but it was a bitter stroke that Somerset was no longer a home for him. De Breauté had seized Stoke under the pre-

tence that it belonged to Alice, whereas it had only been Lady de Courcy's residence during her life, at her son's request. But now that his old home with all its associations was shut against him, he the more determined to hasten the building of the monastery of St. Andrew de Stoke, which was to revive his earliest recollections in his new home.

Nor did he visit Glastonbury. It would have been even more distasteful to him than on his last visit; for by a shameful bargain, as one of the terms of the King's release, the Emperor had insisted on a relative of his own, named Savaricus, being appointed to the Bishopric of Wells, *in commendam* with the Abbey of Glastonbury, thereby making Glastonbury a mere dependency of that see which it had pre-existed several hundred years — Henry de Soliaco, the late Abbot, being compensated by the Bishopric of Worcester. Sir Henry Percheval had died in the East; and Nicholas de Tristram, having been

attached to the Queen's service, was abroad.

Somerset then was no place for him, and only entreating De Briwere to keep a watchful eye upon De Breauté, so as to let him know how poor Alice fared, he for the first time in his life visited England without entering his native county, and returned to Ireland to carry on his work there, with the feeling strengthened that there alone was his earthly home.

On De Courcy's return, he determined to make a progress through Ulster; and as the country was perfectly quiet, Elfrica accompanied him. In the western progress with King Richard, now nearly four years before, he had been much struck with the romantic position and immense strength of Dundagel Castle, in Cornwall. It reminded him of a similarly semi-detached rock near the Giant's Causeway. He determined to visit the spot, and judge how far it was capable of being turned into a strong fortification in the same

fashion as King Arthur's Castle in Cornwall. They set out then for Antrim, where, if the country were peaceable, they proposed making a stay of some length. They both required what is so constantly recommended by doctors of the present day—change both for mind and body; and the invigorating breezes of the North Atlantic were refreshing and health-giving, after the somewhat relaxing air of St. George's Channel. The magnificent position of Dunluce charmed them, and they took up their abode in a quaint old building made habitable for them. Elfrica found a fund of interest and amusement in viewing the wild and magnificent scenery, and in an acquaintance she formed with an old man who claimed Dunluce as his own inheritance.

Macgwillie was now an aged man, but, though acknowledged by many of the native Irish still as chief, his domains had dwindled to a solitary castle perched on the edge of a cliff, with the barren and

rocky country that surrounded it on the land side. The old man had been pillaged and robbed by one and another, and he rather welcomed the Norman English as likely to allow him to retain at any rate the scanty remains of the wide lands which had formerly belonged to him. His accounts of the Macgwillies of former days added to Elfrica's stock of romantic legends; and, according to the old man, there was one champion of his family whose mighty acts rivalled those of Arthur himself. He could trace his pedigree back to the Tower of Babel, for it was an ancestor of his who, on the dispersion consequent on the confusion of tongues, had settled in North Britain, and given it the name of Caledonia, as a reminiscence of Chaldea, from whence he had journeyed to this far-distant land.

Elfrica believed it all, and gave her full sympathy to the old man. She found that he had a grandson, whom she strongly urged to take service with her husband,

but the old man pathetically assured her that his boy *could* not fight against his own countrymen. She asked him then would he join the troop that would be shortly raised to accompany Miles when he went in the train of some knight to France, and this offer was eagerly accepted, and it was decided that Dennis Macgwillie should act as personal attendant to the son of the Earl of Ulster.

Both Elfrica and her husband were greatly refreshed and invigorated by the busy idleness of superintending the works at Dunluce. At times the fortifications had to be carried on in positions of great danger, and the labourers required constantly to be protected against themselves and their own recklessness; but De Courcy found time to accompany Elfrica in her search for the picturesque, and to take her to see every object of interest in the neighbourhood.

The fresh scenes and free mode of life —all state and dignity being thrown aside,

though, of course, strict discipline was maintained—was delightful to those whose life was continually passed in the necessary routine of etiquette and ceremony.

Of all their train, Elfrica remarked that Sir Stephen de Burgos, a knight of well-earned fame, was the one who was most diligent in directing the works, most attentive to the Lady Elfrica and her attendants, always at hand, yet never in the way; and she noted how it soon became a matter of course that in any difficulty or obstruction, while De Courcy guided her footsteps, Sir Stephen ever took charge of Edgitha. When they made excursions to some object of interest at a distance, it was Sir Stephen who arranged the programme, who chose the place where the noontide meal should be held—at one time in some charming woodland retreat, at another on some wild and romantic headland, where an extended view could be seen of the wild Northern Ocean; and whatever the meal was composed of, it

was served with an elegance and grace which made the plainest viands tasteful and agreeable.

Elfrica watched, and smiled to herself as she noted that though she was treated with every possible respect to her rank and position, yet it was Edgitha whose seat was so placed that she should not be incommoded by the dazzling rays of the sun; and whilst her young nephews were deputed to wait upon her, it was by Edgitha's side that De Burgos lingered when he attended to her wants.

Gladly did Elfrica observe these signs of love in Sir Stephen, and hopefully did she watch for the marks of appreciation and return in Edgitha. In one so gentle and retiring, the faint blush that illumined her cheek said little—she was so unaccustomed to be singled out by any special mark of attention. But she could not long remain in doubt; the restlessness when Sir Stephen was away on any message for De Courcy, and the look of

shy happiness when he again took his place at her side, made Lady de Courcy sure that that delight to every true woman's heart—a story of true love—was being enacted before her very eyes.

It was with a blush that might have befitted Edgitha that she told the tale to her husband. At first he was inclined to jest at her, and told her that the spirit of match-making had seized upon her. But she was not to be laughed out of her belief, and said :

'Nay, John, do but watch them yourself, and recall the long-past days when you sought to win a foolish girl's love.'

And, now that his eyes were opened, De Courcy soon saw cause to agree with his wife, and they consulted together as to what was their part in the matter. They knew that Sir Stephen was alone in the world, that he was completely his own master, but that his patrimony was very small, his father having been a younger son.

'But,' said De Courcy, with his splendid generosity, 'that can easily be righted. We can dower Edgitha well, and grant to him Dunluce Castle, with sufficient domains to keep it up.'

'But,' said Elfrica, 'will Edgitha leave her father?'

'I scarcely think that will be necessary,' answered De Courcy. 'Sir Bertram has of late said to me more than once that he is too old for his work, and that I ought to find you a new castellan; but I could not bear to let the old man feel that he was laid aside. But here, in this island castle with Edgitha, they would be safe in De Burgos's absence, and his health would probably improve with the fresh sea-breezes.'

'And who would you make Castellan of Doune?'

'You,' answered De Courcy; 'and I will place some trustworthy squire under your orders.'

Elfrica laughed, and as they were eagerly

plotting for the happiness of others, the reflection of it glanced back upon themselves, and Elfrica was thankful to see more cheerfulness on De Courcy's brow than had rested there for many a day.

Some excuse was easily found for despatching De Burgos to Doune, and he bore with him a letter from De Courcy to Sir Bertram. His absence was short, and he returned with Sir Bertram's full and glad permission to lay his vows at the feet of his lady-love. The work was now pressed on with redoubled vigour, but it was toilsome and dangerous labour, for in some parts the external walls were simply a continuation of the perpendicular cliffs. Two curtain walls joined the island to the mainland, and across these planks were laid, which were removable at pleasure. The rock, though not actually an island, could only be reached by crossing this fearful chasm, which made it practically impregnable.

An excursion was proposed one day to

view the rock and rising castle from the sea. Old Dennis Macgwillie offered to be their guide, and told them of a wondrous cavern which underlay the rock and the castle which they were building. At low tide the cavern might be entered, and they could then view the sides formed of basalt, and the pebbles which formed the flooring smoothed and rounded by the action of the waves. The cavern went entirely under the island rock, and had another opening opposite the land cliff.

Elfrica rallied Edgitha on the wonders and dangers of her future home.

'Ah, my Lady!' she said, 'I should ill have learned the lesson of your life, if I did not know that home is to be with those we love, and that all places are alike if we can but minister to the happiness of others.'

But now De Courcy thought it good to continue his tour of inspection. He left De Burgos with a sufficient force in charge of the works, to guard the labourers and

see that the building was carried on heedfully; and he was satisfied that it would proceed all the more rapidly now that they knew he was preparing a house for his Edgitha. Scouts were sent out to learn the state of the country, and to gather how far it would be prudent for Lady De Courcy and her attendants to continue with the troop. They brought news that there was a gathering of the Irish at Doire-Chalgaich (now Derry), that they had fortified it, and that it would be a difficult place to subdue, for Lough Dir (the Foyle) was on one side, whilst on the land-side it was surrounded by oak woods, which at the same time were a source of protection to the Irish, and of great danger to an invading army. Reluctantly, then, was De Courcy obliged to send Elfrica home under a safe escort. She heartily wished that she could fight by her husband's side.

'And then where would my home be?' said he; 'but an thou wouldst study war,

learn the art of defence from Sir Bertram, so wilt thou be prepared to be my castellan at Doune.'

They parted, and Elfrica found ample occupation in studying for her new duties, and in superintending and pressing forward the buildings, both at her own foundation of the Abbey de Jugo Dei, at Ardres, in the midst of scenery so lovely that the holy maids might well be satisfied to pass their lives there, and at the same time in forwarding those at St. Andrew de Stoke.

The Lady de Courcy and Edgitha were one day inspecting the works which were proceeding rapidly at Ardres, and were especially struck by some sculptures of great beauty, executed by an artist recently arrived from England. He had been spending some time at Doune examining the various ancient buildings, and selecting suitable stone for the work he was about to take in hand. The central figure over the altar was the Lord bending under the

cross—for was not her Abbey to be called 'The Yoke of God?'—and they bent with pious reverence before the representation of the suffering Saviour, as they adored Him whose image it was.

Again they examined the niches on either side, in each of which were figures of great grace and beauty. On the Gospel side was the holy Mother with a sword piercing her heart; and as the Lady de Courcy was earnestly regarding it, she said:

'It is you, Edgitha! the sculptor has taken the image of the blessed Mother-maid from yourself!'

'Oh, surely not, madame!'

'Yes,' she said, 'it is! there can be no doubt—every feature is the same; and see, she wears the graceful Saxon robe we all admire so much. But what figure is this on the other side?'

The sculptor was putting some last touches; but he moved aside, and lo! there stood the beautiful foundress herself, in her robes as Countess of Ulster, bearing a

model of the church in her hands! Elfrica covered her face, and murmured:

'Ah, no! I should not have been there.'* She knelt, and as she bent her head low she prayed, 'Lord, grant me to bear Thy easy yoke and light burthen.'

De Courcy was still detained in Derry, and he had summoned Sir John Savage to his aid, so that it seemed probable that both Elfrica and Lady Savage would have to keep Christmas without their lords. Still Elfrica was prepared to celebrate its festivities with becoming state, and the doles on St. Thomas's day, she would distribute with her own hand. The twenty-first of December had come, and Elfrica's preparations were well-nigh completed: happily did she, with the assistance of Edgitha and Norna lay out the thick rugs and bundles of warm clothing, so arranged that each humble recipient should possess somewhat made by herself.

* The statue of the Lady Elfrica is still pointed out in the exquisite ruins of the Grey Abbey.

There was a service in the chapel, at which all the pensioners were present; after which they were ushered into the Castle-hall, where a huge fire of turf and logs roared up the wide chimney. Provisions, consisting of bread, cheese, beef and mead, were distributed, and they were desired on Christmas morning to bring their wooden bowls for a share of plum-porridge, the best-esteemed part of the Christmas fare.

The great hall doors were now thrown open, and Lady de Courcy herself, clad in a cloak and hood of fur, stood in the porch, handing to each, as they went out, their Christmas gift. There she stood, the fresh cold air heightening the colour on her cheek, her still beautiful golden hair escaping from under the hood, and waving in the wind, her eyes bright with the happiness of blessing and being blessed, as the warm-hearted Irish poured forth streams of benediction upon her; when

'Hark! hush!' she said; 'it is my Lord!'

But the noise of horses' hoofs, if such it was, ceased ; again she listened.

'Ah ! dear friends, forgive me ; I thought it was my Lord.'

They heaped blessings upon her in their rich and quaint vocabulary of Irish metaphor; they prayed for her Lord's safe return. 'He had ever,' they said, 'been a good Lord to them.'

'Is there never a dole for us poor pilgrims ?' said a never-to-be-mistaken voice, as the last of the poor pensioners left, and Elfrica sprang to her husband's arms, whilst Edgitha more shyly greeted De Burgos, who kissed her hand.

'Her lips, foolish fellow!' said Sir Bertram.

'But, Elfrica,' said De Courcy, 'I met a train of thy pensioners laden with good things. I trust they have not cleared the larder, for I have a score of hungry fellows with me, and here I warrant is the hungriest.'

And at a sign from his hand came forth a graceful youth, who had hitherto con-

cealed himself, and Miles de Courcy knelt before his mother. Elfrica's joy was too great for utterance; to have her husband and her son both return to her safe and well!

'How can I bless and thank my God?' she said.

'By your life, sweet one,' he whispered.

It was a joyous Christmastide; festivities were held in church and castle, in guard-room and cabin. How proud was Elfrica of her bright young son! though there was no chance of his reaching the stature and proportions of his father, or of his emulating his great strength. How grateful she was for the praises bestowed upon him by Sir Damian de Lacy in a letter which he sent, asking his consent to his accompanying his son to France! Sir Roger de Lacy was going to join King Richard, and would probably be appointed Governor of the Castle of Roche-Andelys, which Richard was just building.

'It would grace my son,' Sir Damian

said, 'that the son of so valiant a knight and so great a noble should be in his service.'

He assured Sir John de Courcy that he might have perfect confidence in him, and that Miles would be brought under the immediate notice of the King.

'We could wish nothing better for the lad than this,' said De Courcy; and the boy himself added:

'Mother dear, you will let me go? Sir Roger has seen good service; for, while the King was in Palestine, he was in Aquitaine, and bore himself so well that he is one of the most trusted of the King's knights; and, mother, he is as religious and strict a knight as my father or Sir Damian.'

'Yes, my child; and I am thankful, indeed, that it is so ordered for you; and may God make you as true and valiant a knight as your father!'

Miles and De Burgos, in spite of their differing years, became great friends while

promoting the Christmas revels and amusements. There were games and diversions for the people of the soil, and in the evening there were galliards and dances in the great hall; and when Miles was desired by his father to represent him, and choose the fairest lady present as his partner, intending him to lead out Lady Savage, who was a noted beauty, he chose his mother. Being rallied on his choice, he declared he was ready to maintain her as the fairest of the fair in any tournament in England, France, or Ireland.

'Take care,' said his father, 'that you strain not too far your friendship with De Burgos, or we shall have you fighting each for your lady-love.'

Happily, Lady Savage took it in good part, and was content with John de Tristram.

After the twelve days of Christmastide were over, De Courcy and Elfrica made an expedition to Chester, where Sir John sought learned and pious monks for his

foundation of St. Andrew de Stoke; while Elfrica went, by the Abbot's advice, to Holm-Cultrain in Cumberland, to seek for Sisters to place in St. Mary's Abbey de Jugo Dei. She selected as Mother for her Convent a middle-aged nun of sweet, serious aspect, with a type of face one meets only amongst Quakeresses and Sisters of Mercy—faces in which earth and earthly things have little share, and from which passion has been eliminated and devotion is the ruling principle. And Elfrica and Sister Bridget soon became fast friends.

They went back together with their train of monks and nuns, and on the second of February, the Feast of the Purification, St. Mary's, since called the Grey Abbey, was hallowed by Archbishop Cumin; and the Abbess, being consecrated to her high office, was then presented by Elfrica with the deed of gift, which was signed by the foundress herself, her husband, and by Jordan de Courcy as witness.

Exquisitely beautiful was this fair retreat, when, fresh from the hands of the builders, it was dedicated by the pious foundress to the honour of God and the blessed Virgin Mother. Exquisitely lovely now are its ruins in their decay, and little could Elfrica have dreamed, nor, indeed, could she have believed, that a reformed and purified faith would testify its enlightenment and religion by destroying the homes set apart for devotion, study, and good works. Is it too much to hope that one day Ireland may at last be regenerated by a restoration of those pious agencies, and that once again, instead of being a byword among the nations, she may be a home of good works and an isle of saints?

After Easter Edgitha's marriage took place. Miles had brought a wedding-dress which had been selected by the Lady Eveline, and Elfrica's own veil graced the bride. Then, when the feast was over, De Burgos and his wife, with Sir Bertram, set out for Dunluce, now nearly finished and

ready for their reception. Both Lady de Courcy and Edgitha wept much at parting, for their happy intercourse and friendship had lasted now several years. In bidding Sir Bertram adieu, Elfrica thanked him tenderly for the fatherly care he had ever taken of her. The old man stooped to kiss her hand, but she prevented him, and kissed him on both cheeks. De Courcy then, taking the old man's hands in his, thanked him for his watchful guardianship, and both trusted that he might have even a happier home with Edgitha and her husband.

The wedding festivities over, it was necessary to prepare Miles and start him on his new service; and the party at Doune were left with diminished numbers and saddened hearts. But De Courcy soon addressed himself again to work, and found a fresh employment for Elfrica. He thought it well to form in his own household a school for the sons of Irish chieftains; he would fain try whether they could not be trained in

civility and good manners, and at his Court they would act as hostages for their parents. He collected several of these semi-savage young chiefs at Doune, and finding a thoroughly trustworthy and experienced squire, placed them under his charge and that of his brother Jordan, with Elfrica to influence, and, if possible, to raise and refine them, while his two young nephews were his constant attendants, messengers, and companions.

Elfrica undertook this new work with the sweetness natural to her; but as she toiled on in her endeavour to train and civilize them, it was weary work to find her labours utterly thrown away by their untrustworthiness and want of truth; and sometimes she felt as if even brutality itself would have been preferable.

'Fear not, Elfrica,' said De Courcy, 'we work not for hire, but for the Master; and He will prosper the work as seems best to Him. Only let us remember "the time is short, and the Master presses."'

But how short the time was, De Courcy did not know.

It was towards the end of Lent in the year 1195, that Elfrica went, as was her wont, to keep Holy Week at St. Mary's Abbey. It was a bitterly cold spring, and as she watched in the church on the night of our Blessed Lord's agony, she caught a severe chill; yet she tried to join in the solemn services of Good Friday, but during the Tenebræ, she was carried fainting from the church. They laid her on her bed, her breathing became oppressed; the Abbess summoned Father Vincent the chaplain, who was somewhat of a leech; he looked grave and let blood; it relieved her breathing but added to her weakness, which was increased by the strict fast she had kept during Lent.

The Abbess sent a message at once to Doune. De Courcy was just leaving the chapel after the last service, when the news was brought to him; the great warrior trembled from head to foot; once

more he flung himself on his knees, and prayed with passionate eagerness that 'if it were possible this cup might pass from him.' In his ears rang the refrain, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done;' but the words would not come—he could not say them. He vowed, he knew not what in his agony; but the dread fiat had gone forth, and neither bargain nor intercession availed to avert or delay the stroke.

Scarce staying to make the necessary change in his dress, for he was clad in penitential robes, he hastened as fast as his horse could bear him to the Grey Abbey. He arrived at St. Mary's before midnight, and was taken at once, and in silence, to Elfrica's chamber. The absence of any word of cheer or hope struck like a dagger to his heart; surely the sword was piercing his heart also.

One look, and De Courcy knew that the darling of his heart was passing from him; she breathed heavily, and the wan purple eye-lids were closed. He dropped on his

knees and held out his arms; he dared not touch her for fear of hastening the sands of life, as each sobbing breath seemed to mark the falling of a grain.

She moved, her eye-lids unclosed; one glance, and from her face passed the shade of anxiety and pain, and a sweet look of love and restful peace stole over her face. He took her in his arms, and her head rested on his breast.

'Dearest, the Master calls for me; you will wait and work till your call comes also.'

'Elfrica, my wife, my only love, how can I live without thee?'

'The time is short, John; and then for ever with the Lord and His saints!'

De Courcy never knew how the next day and night passed: Elfrica would sleep, then wake with oppressed breathing; he raised her in his arms, where she was most at ease; the nursing Sister would come forward and administer some slight refreshment, some soothing drink; she would send some a message to one and another; a

priest would read some prayers, and then again she would sleep.

She mentioned her boy ever when she spoke.

'Give my dear love to Miles, ask him to follow his Master's footsteps, and tell him to be such a knight as his father. Kiss him for me.'

He bent down and pressed his lips to hers. And so it went on through the day: sleeping, praying, a few tender words, and dozing again. The other watchers changed, but De Courcy never left her.

Just after midnight there was a change, a look of suffering; the Sisters were in the church praying for their foundress. The priest and the Abbess were summoned; the last Sacrament was administered. Again she slept, and excepting the nursing Sister who was kneeling by a crucifix, De Courcy was alone with her who had been the very joy of his life; his eyes were fastened on hers that not a look might escape him.

Once his calmness, born of despair, gave

way, and when she saw the tears streaming from his eyes, and his breast heaving with suppressed sobs,

'My husband,' she said, 'you will try to bear Christ's yoke.'

'Elfrica, Elfrica! it presses too heavily upon me—it is crushing me to the earth!'

'Nay, dearest; His yoke is easy and His burden is light; only bear it, and it will bear you.'

Again she slept; the Easter dawn spread its light over the room.

'Christ is risen,' she whispered, and—she had risen with Him.

CHAPTER III.

FAILURE.—THE UNFINISHED WORK.

At first they feared for his reason, the blow was so sudden, so unexpected; motionless, tearless, speechless, De Courcy knelt by the form of his beloved Elfrica. He neither ate nor slept, and when her body was removed to the church, he knelt there also, till it was hidden from his sight: they knew not how to rouse him. But sooner than could have been expected Miles arrived, having started the moment that the news reached him; his passionate and overwhelming grief roused his father, who exerted himself to comfort his boy.

For his sake he left the Grey Abbey and returned to Doune; for his sake he turned

to his life's work. But when Miles entreated to be allowed to remain with him, De Courcy was firm ; much as he longed for his own sake to keep their only child with him, he steadily refused.

'And yet,' said Miles, with a kind of jealous tenderness, 'you let my cousins stay with you.'

'Yes, my boy,' and he smiled sadly, 'but your cousins are not intended for Earls of Ulster. I have sent Nicholas into foreign service, as was his father's wish, and, to enable you to take your rightful position, I must let you have the best training I can give you. You remember your mother's last message ; it was her fond belief in her husband's excellence that made her speak thus. But how should I be fulfilling her wish if I did not give you the same advantages that I had myself ? I trust that you may be a better man than your father ever was, but I owe it to her memory that you should have no chance of being a worse.'

Miles could say no more ; he had spent

three months with his father, and if he intended doing so, it was time that he should return to France. Together again they visited the Grey Abbey, together they knelt in the room where Elfrica drew her last breath, and together they prayed by the tomb which De Courcy had erected to her memory; and now they parted, and Miles had to leave his father to the healing powers of time, work, and faith.

The state of Meath had for some time made De Courcy anxious. Walter and Hugh de Lacy professed great friendship, and it was difficult to lay hold of any act which could be construed into rebellion against constituted authorities; but it was certain that the state was becoming absolutely lawless, and that the isolation in which the De Lacies lived, seldom or never associating with the other Norman barons, and mixing almost wholly with their mother's relatives who were native Irish and wholly uncivilized, was leading to its natural result, and they were losing the

type of Norman gentilhood, and becoming ruffianly and savage.

De Courcy felt sure too, though unable to prove it, that they were in communication with Prince John, and that there was treachery afoot. All that he could do to strengthen his own position he did, not for selfish reasons, but because he felt persuaded, as indeed it proved, that upon him for the present rested the well-being of the country. About this time a visit of condolence was paid to him by his brother-in-law, Reginald, King of Man; he renewed a treaty offensive and defensive with him, and for the rest he could but do his work, and leave the result in higher hands.

He was cheered at intervals by visits from Sir Nicholas de Tristram, who would gladly have settled at his Barony of Howth; but being attached to a lady of the Queen's household, and there being some difficulty with regard to his marriage, his uncle advised his remaining abroad till he was able to form a household of his own;

and meanwhile his rights and property appeared safe under the care of his brother John de Tristram and Jordan de Courcy. Miles, too, came to visit his father when he could be spared; he was growing up all a father's heart could wish, and was not the less dear that in person he far more resembled his mother than his stalwart father. De Courcy's home circle now only consisted of his brother and his nephews, though of course, actually, it was seldom confined to them, as knights and squires, dignified ecclesiastics and Irish chieftains, were constantly coming and going, to consult him on affairs of state.

He continued to hold courts and festivities at Easter and Christmas, but it was the mere ghost of the former bright and wholesome mirth that had formerly pervaded these gatherings; and De Courcy could not conceal from himself that on the lively and impressionable Irish this solemn sadness had a bad effect. And yet it was like galvanizing a corpse to attempt to re-

vive the old days, when Elfrica presided over and encouraged all manner of joyous and decorous merriment.

Had Miles been old enough to take a wife and bring her to Doune, it might have been different; but De Courcy had made up his mind that till his son could form a bright home circle of his own, he would not run the chance of depressing him, or allowing his chivalry to deteriorate by bringing him to Ireland. Years passed on; he was active as ever, and neither did his strong arm nor his clear head show signs of age: but he felt rather than saw that he was obeyed as the stern warrior and the inflexible distributer of justice, instead of, as heretofore, as the noble Knight, the cheerful friend and the hospitable host.

At last came the fatal news of the year 1199—Richard had lost his life in an ignoble struggle. The news was sent post-haste to Ireland, and John, the brother, and Arthur of Brittany, the nephew of the late King, alike claimed allegiance. Constance of

Brittany had thrown away her child's chance of the crown, and, as it ultimately proved, his life itself, first by her own shameless conduct, but even more perhaps by her folly in refusing to entrust her son to his uncle Richard for his education : from that time Richard no longer acknowledged Arthur, but regarded John as his heir.

De Courcy knew little enough of court intrigues either in England or Normandy, and would have looked upon Arthur as his rightful lord even if personal detestation of John had not made him determine never to own him as his sovereign. He sent word to Walter de Lacy that he intended visiting Meath, and at Tara receiving the homage and duty of both Norman barons and Irish chiefs for Arthur, nephew and rightful heir of their late lord King Richard—Earl, therefore, of Aquitaine, Duke of Normandy and Brittany, Lord of Ireland and King of England. But John had been beforehand, and had already bought the De Lacies' ad-

hesion by the promised bribe to the elder brother, Walter, of the office of Lord Deputy of Ireland, and to the younger, Hugh, of the Earldom of Ulster.

But as yet De Courcy had the country with him. The Norman barons being almost without exception loyal to him, and the hatred of the native Irish to John being so intense, that De Courcy proclaimed Arthur as King of England and Lord of Ireland without opposition, excepting only a protest from the De Lacies, who maintained that even if Arthur were King of England, yet that John was rightful Lord of Ireland, as it had been always destined for him by his father.

Anxiously were tidings awaited from England and France ; but when they came, it only became the more certain that under the influence of his mother, whom he dearly loved, Richard had left the crown to his brother, ignoring entirely the rights of his nephew. Still, De Courcy maintained that as King Richard had publicly ac-

knowledged Arthur of Brittany as his heir, a death-bed bequest could not reverse the former disposition of the kingdom.

The De Lacies were cautious in their treachery. They knew that if John gained the crown, De Courcy would have made him his deadly enemy ; and that their best chance for advancement lay in adhering to John. But for the present they were obliged to temporize, and when De Courcy came to Tara, they took the oaths to Arthur, with a reservation saving the rights of Prince John. They would have said *King* John, but this De Courcy would not permit.

De Courcy could now judge for himself of the un-knightly conduct and semi-savage habits of the De Lacies. They treated their mother with as little respect as they did their faith, which was used as a mere engine of superstition, when it was not ignored altogether—and the Lady Una bemoaned to De Courcy their evil doings, and their ill-treatment of herself.

'Madame,' he said, 'it must needs be so. We sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind; we scatter the seeds of evil, and wonder at the harvest they bring forth. What would you have me do? If Prince John be acknowledged King, I shall be less than nothing to them.'

'Speak to them at least,' almost shrieked their mother. 'You are a man; you were a friend of their father's, and should be a friend to me.'

'Madame, their father was a loyal and God-fearing man, a Norman noble and an English gentleman; but for your sons, alas!' He turned away and said, 'They are but what their training has made them.'

'Yet speak to them,' she said.

'I will speak to them, madame, so please you; but if they heed not their father's memory and their mother's tears, small chance is there that they will listen to me, whom it pleases them to look upon as an enemy.'

De Courcy found an occasion for speak-

ing to the young men; they listened sullenly, while he spake sternly of their excesses, of their unknightly doings, of their undisguised contempt for their mother, to whom, as a Princess in her own right, they owed such influence as they possessed with the native Irish. But, as De Courcy had foreseen, his counsel had no effect but to increase their enmity.

At Dublin De Courcy had a long conversation with Archbishop Cumin, who said that he could but watch events. It had never been the part of the Church to interfere between rival claimants for the throne; all he could do was to wait, and make such terms as he could with the successful candidate. Prince Arthur was young, but if he had his mother for his chief adviser, he could scarcely have a worse; he feared, too, that the nobles of England had been tampered with, and either cajoled or bought over by John; that it was little Ireland could do by herself, and that moreover, if the horrors of civil war were added to the

country's troubles, it would soon fall back into the state of barbarism from which it was only just emerging.

What could De Courcy say? It was but the old argument of Henry of Blois, who had always been his model of a Christian Bishop; but now that the same words were urged to him under nearly the same circumstances, how poor and weak they seemed! Why is it that we are affected so differently at different times by the very same arguments? Is not the difference in ourselves?

It was all true, too true, De Courcy was well-nigh beside himself; but willingly to yield up the fair land he had subdued and civilized, to give up his son's inheritance, to forsake Elfrica's last resting-place, to leave it all to a set of semi-savages who were bent upon effacing all knightly virtues and all Christian civilization, he could not and would not do it. For a time he was successful, but one by one his knights fell off, and made such terms as they could with the King; still there were those who

were loyal and faithful to him, and detested John almost as much as did De Courcy himself.

'I have never failed yet,' he said in his undisciplined agony of pride and shame. 'It cannot be that this is to be added to all my sorrows; that my life's work is to be a failure! Elfrica! Elfrica! all good hope departed with thee!'

His son sent from France entreating to be allowed to join him. He would not permit it, but desired him to join the forces that the King of France and Hugh le Brun, the betrothed and outraged lover of Isabella of Angoulême, were raising against John, with the intention of assuring Normandy to Arthur, and eventually placing him upon the throne of England.

But at last came the fatal news that raised De Courcy's indignation to boiling-point, and yet well-nigh quenched his spirit in despair. Arthur was taken prisoner and confined in the Castle at Rouen. John, with his minion Peter de Maulue, had been

seen there, and——Arthur had disappeared. But rumour was rife that he had been murdered, and by his uncle's own hands. Alas! for whom could he now make a stand? No one spake of Eleanor of Brittany, yet John feared her sufficiently to keep her a lifelong prisoner.

The De Lacies now openly defied De Courcy's authority, and proclaimed King John, who on his part denounced Sir John de Courcy as a traitor, and divided his dignities and possessions between the brothers. The prize they had so long looked for appeared now within their grasp. They made great preparations to secure their new appointments; and assistance from England, which they were now able to obtain, was of course impossible to De Courcy. But still amongst the Normans there were those who remained faithful to him, and the best of the Irish remembered his even-handed justice meted out to Norman and Celt alike; nor had they forgotten Elfrica's good deeds. The influence, too, of the religious houses,

which was considerable, was entirely on his side.

And now that a struggle was imminent, De Courcy bethought him of his brother-in-law, the King of Man, who, indeed, owed his throne to Sir John's assistance, for Olave, King Godred's youngest son by Phingola, had been proclaimed King by a party in the island which declared him Godred's only legitimate child ; and to have admitted this would have been to cast a stain upon Elfrica's birth. De Courcy, therefore, had used both influence and force, and secured the succession to Reginald. He now called upon him for help, and the King of Man brought a fleet, the largest that had ever sailed from that island, and entering Strangford Lough, besieged Rath. But the Manxmen had little discipline, and were not such bowmen as the English ; they were repulsed, and their fleet destroyed by a naval force sent by King John.* So Reginald returned to Man with

* It deserves record, because so little notice is taken of the fact in ordinary history, how much our

the shattered remains of his great fleet, and De Courcy was left to continue the struggle as he could.

Not yet was he schooled to submit to what most others recognised as the inevitable, for the characters of the De Lacy brothers were only displaying themselves more and more. Their castles at Dublin and Meath were strongholds of savagery, vice, and oppression of every kind. De Courcy had still a large following, and he now applied for reinforcements to France, from whence he received a force sufficient to enable him to inflict so severe a chastisement upon the De Lacies, that they saw nothing was to be gained by fair fight. They retreated therefore into Meath, leaving him to suppose that he had effectually crushed his adversaries.

navy owed to King John. He paid great attention to his fleet, and won two great battles over the French at sea. In fact, he was the first king since Alfred who recognised the importance of the navy, and he had, moreover, a most efficient 'First Lord of the Admiralty' in William of Wrotham, Archdeacon of Taunton.

De Courcy was not only a brave soldier and a great commander, he was also a wise statesman: but there was one thing he was not made to understand, and that was falseness and deceit; and above all, he could not conceive faithlessness and treachery in a Norman knight and an English gentleman. That the De Lacies therefore should, on finding themselves overcome, return to their own estates at Meath, in order to concoct a scheme of the blackest villainy, was not only an idea that never could have entered his head, but was also one that, even if it had been suggested to him, he would have refused to believe, as a scandal upon his order. Yet such was the case, and so craftily and with such consummate art was their hideous plot concocted, that not alone De Courcy, but not even one of his trusted followers had an inkling of their vile schemes.

Before, however, they proceeded to carry out their plan, which had the extraordinary merit of combining blasphemy

with treachery, they provided themselves with a commission from the King to seize the person of De Courcy as a traitor, and convey him to London in bonds.

It was in the spring of the year 1204 that, wholly unconscious of the web of treachery that was being wound around him, De Courcy was keeping his Lenten fast, and striving to purge his soul from the sin and corruption that had gathered within it. But whilst he was engaged in these pious exercises, the De Lacies were organizing their scheme. With wiles and bribes they got the ear of a man who had been punished by De Courcy for some infamous conduct, and he enticed others with promises and hopes of large rewards from Hugh de Lacy.

Good Friday, the holiest and saddest day in the Christian year, was the one on which they proposed to carry out their nefarious plot. It was well known that on that day it was De Courcy's practice to fast strictly, and after visiting the various sacred

shrines in the city of Doune, to watch, meditating amongst the tombs in the graveyard of the cathedral till it was time for vespers.

After a night spent in watching and fasting, De Courcy donned a long white penitential garment and attended the religious services of that sacred day. To him, it was a day of peculiar personal tenderness and sorrow. On that day nine years before he had been summoned to Elfrica's death-bed; and now, when he had been watching in imagination the dying agonies of his Lord, unbidden thoughts of her would mingle with his meditations.

Fain would he have watched by her tomb in St. Mary's Abbey; but better not, he thought—loving recollections of her might have swallowed up all remembrance of his Lord: and then he rebuked himself, that at such a time his mind should have wandered back to past days of happiness.

'Have I not yet,' said he, 'learned to bear the yoke of God?'

De Courcy was not alone in his watch: his most loved and trusted followers were with him; his two nephews, now grown to man's estate, John and Arthur de Tristram, were by his side—all clad, like himself, in white robes of penitence. By degrees, and imperceptibly, the cathedral-yard was filling. De Courcy in his abstraction did not notice how the band of penitents increased, nor, if he had, could his noble mind have conceived the possibility of so impious a scheme; travestying as it were, in a grim reality, the Blessed One's betrayal.

Suddenly, at a signal given from outside, the intruders threw off their white garments and appeared in full armour; with a sudden rush they attempted to seize the person of the Earl. Gallantly did he, unprepared and unarmed as he was, fight for his freedom against such fearful odds; with the staff he held in his hands, thirteen of his assailants were laid low at his feet, dead or disabled. Nobly did his little

band of faithful followers second his efforts, refusing to yield, even though they were constantly told that it was only De Courcy whom the traitors sought to take. His two young nephews refused to be torn from his side; but when nigh all that faithful band were slain or stricken down, and De Courcy stood almost alone with the two youths, then was heard a voice on the edge of the crowd, 'Strike!' and John and Arthur de Tristram fell, with their heads cloven by a battle-axe, and De Courcy's feet were bathed with their blood. Looking down upon them tenderly and sadly as they fell, he ceased the struggle: the miscreants were provided with ropes, and winding them round his arms and feet, they dragged him from the holy ground.

As he was forced along, he caught sight of a knight who had taken no part, save to direct, in the foul outrage; but a voice said:

'Now am I Earl of Ulster!'

And De Courcy knew who was the Judas who had done the shameful deed.

Heedfully did Hugh de Lacy himself superintend the ropes being replaced by chains and shackles; then hurried, dragged, forced along, Sir John de Courcy was borne from Doune and placed in a vessel bound for London.

And now De Lacy was clamorously surrounded by his hired ruffians, demanding the reward of their iniquity: he bestowed his bounty lavishly, then, while the price of blood was yet in their hands, he, the arch-traitor, turned upon them and said:

'Ye have done this deed, ye have received your hire; and now tell me, what measure judge ye should be meted to those who have betrayed their lord to his bitterest foe?'

They stood confounded, self-condemned.

'Know ye,' said Hugh de Lacy, making a great show of virtuous indignation, 'that ye have betrayed your lord to his greatest enemy. We must perforce make use of

traitors, but think not that ye shall escape your deserts. Here, Marshal! take these fellows with the reward of perfidy in their hands; hang them from the nearest battlement, and return their ill-gotten gains to my treasury!'

There was a strange mixed feeling amongst Hugh de Lacy's followers, at this climax to his atrocity. There were old soldiers who had served with his father, and who cried 'Shame!' or at least looked with unmitigated disgust at the whole transaction; there were the fresh levies from England, who, apt followers of their master, King John, rendered that homage which vice pays to virtue, viz., hypocritically expressing their horror at the crime, or admiration at the swift Nemesis of justice! Lastly, there were the De Lacies' own boon companions and dependants, who jested and made merry over every fresh piece of villainy.

Meanwhile the great warrior, bound like another Samson, was sent off a close

prisoner to the Tower. With fetters on hands and feet, gagged and bound, De Courcy, the valiant knight, the chivalrous nobleman, the Christian hero, was treated by these ungenerous and cruel traitors as a common felon, and sent, chained and manacled, to prove the tender mercies of the tyrant John.

The voyage was a tedious one, for instead of landing at Bristol or Bridgewater, where it might have chanced that he would have been rescued by his own countrymen, the vessel sailed the whole way round the coast, and going through the Straits of Dover, landed the prisoner at the Tower. There, thrown into a loathsome dungeon, in solitude and chains, in sorrow of heart and bitterness of spirit, he lay, as far as he knew, uncared for, and forgotten by all.

They tried to break his spirit by scanty food ; and small as was the pittance allowed for his maintenance, even part of that was appropriated by the wretch who was

answerable for his safe keeping, and yet dared not trust himself within reach of his arm, manacled as it was.

Months passed away in this state of monotonous misery. No change; no book or occupation had he; and gradually a torpor, bodily and mental, fell upon him; and there he sat on the edge of his miserable pallet day after day, striving only, by clasping his hands over his eyes, to shut out the horrible darkness, which was so terrible to one who had rejoiced all his life in sunshine and pure air, in freedom and brightness; and as he rocked himself to and fro, he moaned:

'Elfrica! Elfrica! my beloved! all my good fortune, all earthly joy, all heavenly hope have gone with thee! Elfrica! Elfrica! be near me, comfort me!' As he was thus bewailing himself, he clasped his hands on his breast, as though he were once more straining Elfrica to his heart; and as he pressed them there, he felt something hard and sharp. It was Elfrica's

crucifix; he had placed it on his heart when he went on that stern pilgrimage which had so fatally betrayed him to his enemies. He knew it was there, and at times he had tried to take to himself the lesson that it taught; but somehow now, the momentary pain that the sharp edges gave him roused him from the state of self-abandonment and desolation, and he said:

'Ah! dear Lord, have I received good from Thine hand, and shall I not receive evil? Thou wast my Lord before Elfrica was mine, and yet I said that all heavenly hope had deserted me when Elfrica was taken!' He took off the crucifix, which hung by a chain from his neck, and kissing it reverently and with tenderness, he placed it in front of him.

'Alas!' he said, 'I have put the creature before the Creator; I have loved my darling more than Thee, O Lord! Elfrica, it was thou who warnedst me against placing a saint, however holy, in place of

his Master: do thou guide my steps to follow my Lord.'

Night followed, or what De Courcy supposed to be night. Confinement, foul air, and starvation were doing their work. Did his mind wander? Was a vision vouchsafed to him? or was it indeed a dream, and but the result of the thoughts that had so lately filled his mind?

He thought that he knelt before Elfrica's crucifix; and as he knelt, he said—for not yet had he learned fully the lessons that his sorrows were to teach him:

'O God! wherefore dealest Thou thus with me, who have built and re-edified so many monasteries to Thee and Thy saints?'

Then before his eyes appeared the form of the Holy Trinity, as represented by the image at Doune, only enlarged and glorified; and the Triune Majesty answered, saying:

'Why didst thou cast Me out of My church at Doune, and place there My Saint

Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland? Therefore thus saith God, Know thou well that thou shalt never enter into thy seignorie in Ireland. Howbeit, in regard to the good deeds thou hast done, thou shalt shortly, with honour, be delivered from prison.'

De Courcy started and awoke; the vision had vanished, but, with Elfrica's crucifix clasped to his breast, he lay on his pallet and slept a sweeter sleep than he had done since his captivity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING'S MESSAGE.

A FEW days only after the vision or dream took place that we have described in the last chapter, the gaoler entered the dungeon in which Sir John de Courcy was confined, at an unaccustomed time ; and instead of addressing him in his usual surly tone, requested that he would arise and follow him. He found himself, however, unable to rise without assistance, which was respectfully given. He was then led into a larger and lighter room. Two warders were awaiting him, and one thus addressed him :

'Sir, we have orders to take the chains from off your hands, to provide you with a

bath and fresh attire, and food will then be set before you.'

'By whose orders is this done?' said De Courcy.

But the sudden coming into daylight and fresh air caused him to feel dizzy, and his head to swim, and he would have fallen had he not clutched at the heavy oaken table which formed part of the furniture of the room. The warders hastened to his side, placed him in a chair, and one brought him a stoup of wine which revived him. Again he asked:

'By whose command is this done?'

'Sir,' said the chief warder, 'we are not permitted to answer any questions. The person under whose orders we act will shortly himself be here, and tell you what you desire to know.'

After the refreshment of the bath, the change of clothing and food, De Courcy awaited what would follow. He tried to move up and down the room, but not only were his limbs weak, and he himself more

feeble than he could have believed possible, but the shackles to his feet were not removed; and moreover, unnoted by himself, the chain attached to them had been bolted to the floor. It served, however, to conceal his weakness from himself, and after making a step or two he was glad to seat himself in the chair, which was sufficiently comfortable, and rest.

In a few moments the bar from the outside door was removed, bolts were drawn, the lock turned. De Courcy did not move—he scarcely knew what to expect; but the promise, 'Thou shalt shortly, with honour, be delivered from prison,' was it now to be accomplished? His elbow was on the table, and his head still rested on his hand; the door opened, and slowly and with an undecided step entered Falkes de Breauté. De Courcy started to his feet, and the two stood confronting one another.

* * * * *

But before De Breauté states the object of his visit, we must turn back awhile, and

remove the scene to Somerset. The reader doubtless remembers that De Breauté had, by force, made De Courcy's sister, Alice de Redvers, Countess of Devon, his wife. During Richard's absence he had seized upon the Castle of Stoke; and when the rightful owner had refused to acknowledge King John, he treated it as forfeited, and as though it were entirely his own. The Castle was now full of a villainous crew, who held there the wildest orgies, and tyrannized over the whole neighbourhood, keeping it in a state of terror and subjection.

De Briwere had enough on his hands; nor did he see how he could benefit his friend by endeavouring to dislodge De Breauté, even had it been possible, the more so as Falkes's wife was De Courcy's sister. Had De Courcy's mother been alive, he persuaded himself that he would have done somewhat; as it was, he watched events.

And so poor Alice de Redvers, or, as

we should rather call her, the Lady de Breauté, was kept in a kind of imprisonment. She saw as little as she could of her brutal husband and his followers; but sate much alone in her turret, and occupied herself with tending her little daughter Lucie; her thoughts wandering ever to the bright days of her youth, and the happiness of her early married life, when she held sway as a princess in the fair county of Devon. And then she would think of her brother; of her pride and joy in his career. And now, now he had given her up; and yet how she longed to comfort him, in the sorrows which she knew had rent his heart!

Her sole comfort was in her child, a fair, delicate little creature; and her one great desire was to keep her in ignorance of what was going on in the rest of the Castle. This, too, was a bitter ingredient in her cup of sorrow; that her own birthplace, her brother's inheritance, her father's and mother's home, should be a hold for devilry and license of every kind.

Much of her time she spent in weeping; and yet she strove, for her child's sake, to be as cheerful as possible, and to keep from her every sight and sound that could pollute her eyes or ears.

It was little that these two, the mother and child, saw of their husband and father. But one day, when the lady was seated in her turret-chamber, the door opened, and De Breauté himself appeared. She, poor thing, looked scared and astonished, and rose as if to receive a visitor.

'Well, madame,' he said; 'I bring you news, which doubtless will be of much interest to you.'

'I know not what news should interest me,' she said wearily.

'Not news concerning that precious brother of yours, the traitor De Courcy?'

'Oh, Falkes!'

She sank back in her chair. She tried to rise, and could not. She placed a hand on each arm of the chair; her large eyes

dilated; she fixed them upon him. Her wan face glowed.

'Tell me, O Falkes! tell me, what of him?'

'Ah, madame! I am Falkes now, am I—now that you would fain learn something from me? At other times I am Sir Falkes, or De Breauté; but now that it suits your purpose, you grace me with a more familiar title. But prithee why such wild excitement? How know you not that my news is good?'

'How!' she answered, goaded almost to madness. 'Because if it had been, you would not have brought it to me.'

He looked at her, but did not speak; a sort of wild hope arose in her mind. Was he at hand? Could he be near?

'Oh! if it is good, I will call you husband, friend; at least, you are my child's father.' She clasped her hands over her eyes for a moment, then looked again.

'Tell me—husband,' she said, with an effort, 'is it good news?'

'Yes,' he answered, with a sneer, 'for is

it not good news that a traitor to our royal master has been for months a prisoner in the Tower?'

She started on her feet.

'It is not, cannot be true. Who would have dared? Who *could* have taken John de Courcy prisoner? It will kill him. My brother! Oh, John! John!'

Suddenly she dropped on her knees.

'Falkes! you have destroyed my good name, you have outraged me, you have broken my heart; but it shall be all nothing, nothing, so that you set free my brother—so noble! so brave! I would rather hear that he were dead outright, than eating his heart out in a dungeon. Have some mercy!' She dragged herself on the floor to reach him, and clasped her arms around his knees. He looked down upon her, and said:

'I vowed that I would bring you to your knees! You a haughty Norman dame, and I "a low adventurer of mean extraction"? Hey! madame?'

'And can you not be satisfied, now that you have brought me so low?' she said. 'Only visit not my bitter words on *his* head. There is but one step from the dungeon to the grave. Free him, free him!'

'But what is it you expect me to do?'

'Go to the King and demand his freedom, as the price of your services to him.'

'You poor fool! Do you suppose for a moment that King John would grant him his pardon? or that if he granted it, De Courcy would accept it?'

'I asked not for his pardon—for *that* John de Courcy could not need—but for his freedom. Are there no means?'

'Yes,' said De Breauté; 'but even if your ladyship prefers kneeling, methinks I tire of standing, so I will e'en take your seat.' He seated himself carelessly, and she still knelt, leaning her head against the arm of his chair, her hands clasped in front of her.

'Now then,' he continued, 'the case stands thus: It has been arranged between

the Kings of France and England that the points in dispute between them should be decided by single combat between champions named for France and England. King Philip's champion is prepared—he has vowed that his name shall not be disclosed till he has won the day; but——' he stopped.

'Well,' said Alice wearily, not in the least perceiving how this affair of State could concern her. 'What then? Surely England has plenty of brave men who will fight in her cause!'

De Breauté hesitated again.

'Brave men doubtless there are many, but ——'

'But,' said Alice, as she rose from her knees, and stood looking at him with a touch of ineffable scorn, 'not one that will fight for base King John! Is that it?' She waited for an answer, but none came; and she continued:

'And so my brother, John de Courcy, descended from the ancient royalty of

France, heir to Charlemagne, and who possesses a better title to the crown than King Philip himself—he, the trusted friend of two Sovereigns, their Deputy in Ireland, Earl of Ulster, Lord of Courcy in Normandy, and even of this very Castle which you have seized, and of which you generously permit the use of one poor turret to his sister—he, he is to do what all the King's minions are *afraid* of!'

He did not answer, overpowered and astonished by her torrent of words.

'No! he will not fight; but,' she said, turning from him as she spoke, 'you can ask him, if you *dare!*'

'That,' he said, 'is what I have come to desire you to do; I am about to carry you to London to make him this offer.'

'No, sir,' she said, turning round and facing him; 'I will *not* carry King John's message.'

'Perverse fool! When I offer you to go and see your brother, with an honourable offer of pardon and liberty, you will

not go, but prefer that he should rot in a dungeon!'

She wrung her hands, and burst into tears.

De Breauté preferred her indignation to her weeping; besides that, he doubted not that now she would yield. He proceeded to leave the room, saying:

'At all events, you will please to make your preparations to go to London; we start early to-morrow.'

'And Lucie?'

'I suppose your ladyship will scarce travel without female attendants, and whoever waits upon you can take charge of her.'

And so the next morning they started for London, which, however, it took them several days to reach; and poor Alice was forced to Court, to pay her respects to Queen Isabel, who made it a personal favour to herself, that she would seek to induce her brother to undertake the championship.

'Madame, I cannot,' was all her reply.

'De Breauté,' said the King, 'you guide your wife ill; you should compel her to go.'

'May it please your Highness, I will go myself,' answered he. 'I fear neither man nor devil!'

'Go, then, in the devil's name,' said the King, 'since this wilful wife of yours will not!'

And now the reader knows how it was that Falkes de Breauté stood face to face with John de Courcy.

When De Courcy saw who it was, he said:

'Was it to you then, Falkes de Breauté, that I owe my release from a fate worse than death, the dungeon and starvation? Had I guessed this, I would have remained in the loathsome den, where I have lain heaven knows how long, for I have lost all count of time.'

'Fair brother,' began De Breauté.

'Call me by that name again, and, if I cannot reach thee, I will split thy skull with this chair! Keep off, I say!'

'Sir, are you mad?'

'Heaven knows; but I know that if, as I believe, I am sane, the sight of thee alone is enough to make one mad.'

'Well, sir, I came here to make a proposal by which you may be delivered from confinement, with honour to yourself. Will you not listen to me?'

'To be delivered from prison with honour!' murmured De Courcy to himself. 'Yet what of honour could be associated with the name of De Breauté? It is but a device of the evil one. If the blessed Trinity will my release, They will use other agents than this.—Leave me!' he said aloud, and moved his hand with a gesture of command.

Even the blustering De Breauté was touched at the sight of the wan face and gaunt features of the great warrior; his sunken eyes and grey hair touched even his fierce spirit.

'Sir John de Courcy,' he said, 'friend of mine hast thou never been; but I declare

to heaven that I came here to-day with an honourable proposal; thou hast rejected my good offices, and treated me with disdain.'

'And I say to thee, Falkes de Breauté, that I spit upon and reject thy proposal, be it what it may, as I would reject an offer from the foul fiend himself, whose servant thou art!'

'Thy blood be on thine own head then,' answered De Breauté, as he turned to go; and making a signal, the door was opened behind him, and he passed out.

But this stormy interview and the consequent excitement could not but have its effect upon De Courcy, in the weak state to which he was reduced; and when the warders brought him his evening meal, he was found in a dead faint, from which they had much ado to recover him; and this was followed by delirium, and for several days he had to be watched night and day, and little did his watchers think that he could ever recover. His naturally strong

constitution, never weakened by vice or excess, bore him, by God's blessing, through the fever which was of the type now called typhoid. But it left him in a state of fearful weakness, unrefreshed by restless nights, disturbed by visions, and likely to sink lower still from utter want of spirit or energy to throw off the low fever which was consuming him.

Meanwhile De Briwere, who knew of, and had mourned over, his dear old friend's capture and imprisonment, had also bethought him of this affair of the championship as a means of effecting his release; and not knowing of the attempt made by De Breauté, he appeared before King John, and with more eagerness than he was wont to show, opened the matter, and suggested De Courcy as invincible in fair fight.

'Marvellous,' said the King, 'how all our councillors agree! Here is the ruffian De Breauté; the winner of all hearts, our Queen; and now the politic De Briwere—

all declare that if only this De Courcy will undertake our quarrel, our victory is secure. But *will* the fellow fight for us? He has ever hated us, and, to do him justice, has never striven to conceal it. He is a rebel, and has defied our authority. I will never demean myself by a second time asking him to fight for me.'

'Sir,' said De Breauté, 'there is no other.'

'Do as you will, then,' said John. 'An he will not, it shall be the worse for him!'

Sir William de Briwere left Windsor instantly for London. He had much to think of. How would De Courcy receive him? He knew he had not played a chivalrous part towards his old friend. It was not the way Almeric de Tristram would have acted. But how did matters stand? Sir Almeric had thrown his life away on a chivalrous and fantastic point of honour; De Courcy was a prisoner in the Tower; whilst he, De Briwere, was

prosperous and respected, high in the King's favour. And yet he could say with truth that he had never consented to any cruel or ungodly act; that he had kept free from the vices of the Court; and that in no way had he personally swerved from truth and justice. One thing was plain to him—if he lacked the chivalry and self-devotion of a knight-errant, yet now there was a plain duty before him, and he was thankful to seize the first safe means that presented itself of setting his friend at liberty. And yet—he dreaded his reception.

De Courcy still remained in the more comfortable apartment in which he had been placed, but the low intermittent fever still hung about him, and his dejection increased; for how knew he that the offer—an honourable one, so De Breauté had declared—would be repeated? and now, though there was no actual lack of food, he had no appetite, and turned with loathing from the prison fare.

He was seated as usual, his head resting on his hand, when the door opened, and the warder began to announce, 'The Most Honourable Sir——' But the intruder, whoever he was, said, 'Hush! Silence!' De Briwere, for it was he, stopped, and looked. The grey hair, the untrimmed beard, the wasted hands with every bone showing—surely this could not be De Courcy!

The head was raised, and he saw the hollow eyes, the face in which grief, want, and sickness had made such ravages.

'Man,' said he, turning to the warder, 'who is this?'

'The Most Honourable Knight, Sir John de Courcy.'

'Fellow, thou shalt hang for this!' Then, pushing the man aside, the door clanged after him.

'John, dear old friend!'

The wily politician, the prudent statesman, the cautious friend, were all forgotten. It was Will Briwere and John

de Courcy. And De Briwere flung his arms around him, and burst into tears.

'God forgive me, John! I never guessed this! What have they done to you?'

'Naught, Will, naught! They have but let me alone; and you had better let me alone too—to die!'

'Look up, dear old friend! you shall be out of this at once.'

'No, Will, De Breauté had the hardihood to come with some offer from your King, but I would listen to naught from him or his master; at least mine honour is my own, though all else is gone.'

'John, you will not fear my bringing you any offer that will compromise your honour. The matter is briefly this: Normandy and Brittany are lost to the crown of England; but there are still some castles and demesnes which in no way belong to the Dukedom. King Philip maintains that they belong to the crown of France. It is proposed to decide the cause by champions, chosen respectively

for England and France; and King John has desired me to ask of you to undertake the cause for England.'

'And this was what De Breauté came to offer?'

'I did not know that De Breauté had been here, but I suppose it was.'

'Then it was not done in falsehood and treachery; but why cannot De Breauté fight himself?'

'Thou knowest well, De Courcy, the life he has led.'

'I thank heaven I know naught of it.'

'At any rate, one who has led a life of unbounded license is not the stuff of which heroes are made.'

'And think you that this weak frame, this bag of bones, could fight; I doubt my being able to mount a horse, much less to keep my seat on one.'

'Ah! John, we will feed you up; but how can I go back to Miles, who has left me no peace, imploring—nay, I well believe,

even threatening, if I do not procure your release.'

De Courcy's eyes glistened, and his voice trembled, as he said:

'Thank God! and where is my boy?'

'In the marsh-lands of Somerset, safe at Ile de Briwere: it was a happy thought when he came to England—which he did the moment he heard of your captivity, though it was some time before it was known in France—to come straight to me; but much ado had I to persuade him that the worst turn he could do you would be to give himself up to the King. Separate, and one at liberty, you were safe; but together in King John's hands, I could not answer for your life.'

'And this is your King, De Briwere!'

De Briwere was silent; but after a pause, he said:

'For Miles's sake, John, you will accept the King's offer, and fight for him?'

De Briwere, in his eagerness, had forgotten the caution he had used at first, in

resting his argument alone on the honour of England.

De Courcy rose suddenly from his chair; he drew about him the loose wrapping garment they had provided him, as though it had been his Earl's robe, and taking short impatient steps, walked as far as the length of his chain would permit him.

De Briwere watched him heedfully, both because he feared which way the hard struggle that was going on within would end; and also because, in spite of his high spirit, he saw that De Courcy reeled as he walked, from weakness, and he feared his falling to the ground. At last De Courcy's mind seemed made up, and, stopping in his walk, he said:

'Tell your King that not in *his* quarrel, nor for *his* sake, but for the kingdom's honour, I will fight to the death.'

But the sore mental strife had been too much for his bodily weakness: he tottered, and would have fallen; but De Briwere was prepared, and throwing his arm round

him, guided him to his seat. Nor could he speak again till the guard, summoned by De Briwere, brought some restoratives and refreshment.

'I look like a man ready to fight in a mortal combat, do I not?' he said, with a smile of mingled bitterness and sadness, but which had no gladness in it.

'We will hearten you up, and get back your strength, and make you ready for the fight, old friend! I go but to make necessary arrangements.'

Then turning to the guard, he said:

'Provide this gentleman with all that is needful, and see that there is no neglect.'

'My guard, since I left the dungeon, have treated me well, De Briwere, or I had not been alive.'

Sir William Briwere saw the Governor, and desired, in the King's name, that De Courcy's chain should be taken off, and that he should have every care and comfort provided for him till his removal; and the

Governor undertook that food should be sent from his own table.

Then De Briwere returned to the King with De Courcy's answer. At first he only said generally that he had accepted the championship; but King John insisted on knowing in what terms he had signified his assent: and when he heard the bitter words he had used, he laughed aloud, and said:

'Well, he has saved his honour; and if he saves my castles, what care I for whom he does it?'

But the mean, petty malice which formed so large an ingredient in John's character soon showed itself. On finding that De Briwere had arranged that De Courcy should at once be removed from the Tower to his own lodgings in London, he professed great indignation, and forbade its being done.

'How know I,' said he, 'but that, when he is at liberty, he may not return at once to Ireland, and raise a new disturbance

there, and leave judgment to go by default in favour of Philip?'

'Sir,' said De Briwere, 'you little know John de Courcy to suppose such a thing possible. "Omnia vincit veritas" is his motto; and, verily, he could as soon swerve from his plighted word as the sun from its course. Sir, I will answer with my head for Sir John de Courcy's truth.'

'Brave words, De Briwere! But, meanwhile, De Courcy leaves not the Tower without a hostage for the fulfilment of his pledge, approved by myself.'

De Briwere stood irresolute, and showed, what was rare indeed with him, an annoyance amounting to indignation. He, however, restrained himself, and said:

'Your Grace is resolved on this?'

'Absolutely,' said John. 'And if he can find no hostage that will content me, he may rot in the dungeon whence he came!'

Sir William Briwere turned on his heel, and left the room.

'I would offer myself as hostage,' he

said to his wife, 'as sure of John de Courcy's truth as I am of my own—aye, surer,' he added, in a low voice—'but that, in the first place, I doubt King John accepting me; and, secondly, I doubt whether anyone else could carry the matter through. There is but one way, and that must be managed in spite of De Courcy himself; for no earthly power would induce him to consent to it.'

'And what is that?' said Lady Beatrix.

'Young Miles must offer himself as his father's hostage.'

'But is that safe?'

'Yes; at least I trust and believe so. For never could I look John de Courcy in the face again, if aught of harm came to the lad. De Courcy would be safe with us; and as soon as the fight was fought, Miles would be free.'

'And if he failed?'

'Then God help them both! But it is impossible, I tell you; there is not that man living that could defeat John de Courcy in

fair fight. I will set out this very night for Somerset, and bring Miles back.'

'Can you not send a messenger?'

'I dare not trust a soul. Who knows how they would be tampered with?'

At that moment was announced—

'The Worshipful Knight Sir Nicholas de Tristram.'

Before almost De Briwere could greet him, the young man said:

'Sir, where are my uncle and my cousin? Can this horrible story be true? My uncle most treacherously taken prisoner, my brothers foully murdered, and now Miles, my cousin, seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth! You were once my uncle's friend. It is all like a horrible dream: tell me, for heaven's sake, what it all means.'

'My dear young friend, that your uncle is a prisoner, and your brothers slain, is, I grieve to say, true; for the rest, Sir John de Courcy will, I trust, be almost immediately at liberty, and Miles is in Somerset.'

How those soft words and that measured voice grated upon and irritated Sir Nicholas! He felt as if he could weep tears of blood; he longed to avenge the slaughter of his young brothers, and to achieve his uncle's liberty by the force of his own right hand! And then to hear that mild persuasive voice speaking so gently and restrainedly, when he felt as if, if he spake, he must pour forth a torrent of burning words, full of bitter wrath and indignation!

All he could trust himself to say, was:

'Miles in Somerset, and since when?'

'He has been there some weeks. I thank heaven that his first impulse, like your own, was to come to his father's oldest friend. I detained him there, a most unwilling prisoner. He would have gone straight to the King, and demanded his father's liberty; but I at last succeeded in persuading him that it would, probably, only cause his father's destruction, in addition to his own, and could by no possi-

bility benefit him; but now I want him here.'

He then explained to the impatient young man the present state of affairs, and that Miles might now offer himself as hostage for his father; and he could speak with almost certainty of Miles, or possibly Miles and another, being accepted by the King.

'Then,' said Nicholas, 'if this is so, why is not Miles here?'

'I was about to start for Somerset myself this very night.'

'Let me go!' said Nicholas eagerly; 'I *could* not remain idle, awaiting events. I will bring Miles back, and you can remain here and watch over my uncle's safety.'

'That will be in every way the best plan,' said De Briwere; for he felt that he could scarcely have gone into Somerset, and left this fiery young man in London, without grave risk of his committing some indiscretion which would upset the whole arrangement. 'But you must make your

cousin understand that he cannot see his father; for did Sir John suppose for a moment that he bought his own liberty at the price of his son's, no power on earth would induce him to leave the Tower.'

'Do not I know that well?' said Sir Nicholas. With some difficulty Sir William Briwere persuaded Nicholas de Tristram to take needful rest and refreshment before he set off on his journey, and earnestly he entreated him to be prudent, and let no one suspect his errand.

Happily for the necessary delay in releasing De Courcy, he positively refused to be carried forth from the Tower in a litter, like a sick lady, and insisted on waiting till he was able to mount a horse: so that, under the influence of hope and better living, his health improved so rapidly, that by the time the two noble youths returned from the West, he was strong enough to mount a quiet and easy paced old charger, and ride from the grim old fortress in company with Sir William Briwere. He had,

in the meantime, arranged with the King that the two cousins should be accepted as hostages for De Courcy's honour. John pooh-poohed at the notion of De Courcy being kept in ignorance of hostages being required, and argued that actually they were no safeguard for De Courcy's truth, while they themselves were in great danger if he broke his word.

'*If*,' said they both at once; and Miles added: 'We run no shadow of risk, sir;' whilst Nicholas, with less prudence and more heat, added:

'If, sir, our only danger is from my uncle forfeiting his word, we are absolutely safe; but if there be danger from other contingencies, then gladly will we risk it for the love and duty we owe him.'

De Briwere had now to exercise his diplomacy in making the transfer without De Courcy suspecting that any guarantee, save his own word, was required for his honour; while Miles had to curb his impatience to throw himself into his father's

arms. He was only able to catch a glimpse of him as he rode forth with Sir William Briwere, on his way to being installed with his cousin in the room his father had just vacated.

The King was now anxious to know how soon De Courcy would be ready for the combat; and the leeches assured him it would be at the least two months, probably more, before he would regain his full strength.

The French champion arrived, and was domiciled with the French ambassador, whom John took care, in modern school-boy phrase, to cram with every possible and impossible tale of De Courcy's prowess in war and marvellous strength.

He himself, meanwhile, was being nursed tenderly and carefully by De Briwere and the Lady Beatrix. His health began to improve; the low fever left him, but was succeeded by a languor so great, that the very softness and sweetness of De Briwere, which he had formerly well-nigh despised,

was now soothing and pleasant to him. It required much tact and delicacy to select topics for conversation which would neither unduly excite or depress him. At first Lady Briwere could only venture to talk of her husband's and his early days; and then he gradually became accustomed to hear Alice's name mentioned; and the Lady Beatrix would bewail her hard fate in being united to so great a ruffian as De Breauté; and she praised much the gentleness and patience with which Alice had borne his brutality.

De Briwere had left his family in Somerset; but one day, when De Courcy was resting on a couch, weary with the idleness which his state of weakness enforced, there ran into the room a charming little girl whom Lady Briwere called Lucie. De Courcy, struck by his mother's name, called the child to him, and fondled her with the tenderness that big men so constantly show to creatures smaller and weaker than themselves.

'And what is thy name, little one?' he asked.

'Lucie Alice,' answered the child.

De Courcy almost started, and looked at Lady Briwere. But she was gazing at something from the window.

'Lucie Alice what?' he said.

'Lucie Alice de Breauté,' answered the child.

De Courcy gently removed the little one from his knee, and placed her at some distance from him; and, in his old way, wearily rested his elbow on his knee, and his head upon his hand. But little Lucie did not understand that the gentle way in which he had put her out of his arms was intended for a repulse. If she came in her father's way, an oath or even a blow sent her flying from his sight; so she did not shrink from De Courcy's side, but came up close to his knee, and, looking up in his face, said:

'Are you tired, sir?'

'Very, very tired, Lucie.' But, never-

theless, he replaced her on his knee, and after a moment he said :

'Hast thou ever heard of thy uncle John de Courcy, child ?'

'Oh, yes !' she answered. 'Mamma is always talking to me about my uncle De Courcy. And she always tells me to speak the truth, for he hates a lie. She tells me, too, how truth will conquer all things ; but she does not say very much.'

'And why not, Lucie ?'

'Because she always begins to cry, and says she shall never see her brave good brother again.'

'Where is mamma, Lucie ?'

'Oh ! mamma is here. Papa is staying with King John, at Windsor ; and so mamma and I are staying with Lady Briwere.'

'Will you ask mamma to come and see me, Lucie ?'

Lady Briwere softly left the room, while Lucie ran away, calling :

'Mamma, mamma ! the tall gentleman

on the couch wants to speak to you. Come! he is so tall, he must be as tall as my uncle John de Courcy; and he is so kind and good.'

The child took her mother's hand, and leading her in, said:

'Here she is, sir; here is mamma.'

Poor Alice stood at the door, her hands clasped. In a moment John was at her side: he took her in his arms, he covered her with kisses, he called her his 'poor darling.'

'Oh! John, John!' was all she could say.

At last she ventured to steal a glance at his face; she burst into tears: 'Oh! John, how ill you are! what have they done to you?'

'Ah! Alice, it is well you saw me not a month ago, when I looked more fit for a tomb than a tourney; but De Briwere and his good dame have fed me up, till, I fear me, I must have created a famine in the land, for I have eaten like a very were wolf. I had not tasted a good meal since before Lent twelvemonth.'

By mutual but silent consent, all agitat-

ing subjects were avoided. They returned to their childish days, when Alice, as the elder, petted and waited upon her brother, whilst he, as of the stronger sex, and with the stronger nature, alternately protected and tyrannized over his sisters. They talked of their mother, and Alice would speak of her early married life with her first husband; but De Breauté's name was never mentioned, and De Courcy could not trust himself to speak either of Ireland or Elfrica: the slightest allusion to either made him shrink as from the rough handling of a wound.

But De Courcy was almost happy in having something given him once again to love and cherish; to have a darling again seemed to give him new life. So he put aside his grief for a time, and yielding himself to present rest and comfort, allowed himself to be amused by the winsome ways of his little niece; and the improvement in his health and strength became more rapid.

De Briwere, who was in constant com-

munication with the King, at Windsor, was enabled to report favourably of his champion's progress. One day he gave a laughing report of his great appetite, which hugely amused King John, and which he turned to good purpose. He gave the most rhodomontade account to the French ambassador of the enormous supplies that De Courcy disposed of; he made his own people ply the attendants of the French embassy with the wildest tales. Giant Blunderbore was nothing to him; he eat an ox, or at least a calf, at a sitting, and bread, wine, and mead in proportion. All this, and more, the King, with huge delight and infinite gravity, poured into the ears of anyone likely to come in contact with the nameless French champion; and John had at least the satisfaction of finding that his extravagant description had had the effect he intended, when he overheard the ambassador making careful inquiries as to the height and strength of De Courcy. It was said too, by those who had seen the

French champion, that he turned pale at the very name of De Courcy, and that it was quite evident he had no stomach for the fight.

And now, a full week before the time fixed, Sir John de Courcy sent word that he was ready for the combat. It was to take place in the Ward of Chepe, where tournaments were wont to be held. The lists were arranged, and everything in order, when there came an urgent messenger from France. He brought a vehement protest from King Philip against the combat taking place in England. It would have been all well, he said, had it taken place at once; but now that the delay caused by the illness of the English champion had been so great, it was only fair that he should be satisfied that his champion was in good condition, and had not been tampered with. King John stormed a little, but the wisest of his councillors advised his submitting with a good grace to the King of France's demand, so that in case of any debate

arising, Philip might have no excuse for impugning the fairness of the proceedings.

So it was decided, and De Courcy, in far different case than he had been two months before, prepared to go to France. Poor Alice scarcely knew how to part with him, but he cheered her by telling her that when he was reinstated in his command in Ireland, she should preside in his Court. Of his little niece he took a most affectionate farewell, and she wept much at parting with one so gentle as her uncle, and so utterly unlike her father and his boon companions.

De Courcy rode to Southampton with the Earl of Pembroke and De Briwere, his two sponsors, and there met the King, who had gone by a different route. A splendid galley, the *St. Andrew*, was awaiting them, provided by William de Wrotham, Archdeacon of Taunton, keeper of the King's ships and seaports. They went on board, and there John, King of England, and Sir John de Courcy met face to face for the

first time since 1185, when John paid his fatal visit to Ireland. It is true they had both been present at King Richard's coronation, but they had then studiously avoided each other.

Had John been capable of possessing any sense of shame, he must have felt it when De Courcy, uncovering his head, prematurely grey, stood before the King. But, ignoring all unpleasant recollections, King John lightly congratulated De Courcy on his recovery, and thanked De Briwere for having arranged the matter of the championship so satisfactorily, and having secured the services of one in whom he had such entire confidence. Even De Briwere looked astonished. Entire confidence in one whose son and nephew were kept in prison as sureties for his truth!

De Courcy spoke not—perhaps he could not—as he thought of his old friend, Hugh de Lacy, of Sir Almeric de Tristram, of Elfrica, all passed away since last they

met. Grave and stern was the champion, as he bowed and retired to the further part of the vessel; grave and stern he remained, as the passage was being made. He sate on deck, but looked out over the sea with unnoting eyes and far-away thoughts. The weather was brilliant, the voyage rapid and favourable. They put in at Havre de Grace, and then, taking horse, proceeded to Paris, where lodgings were provided for the King and his retinue.

The lists were set at the Champ de Mars, a place which had been used since the time of Clovis for judicial combats. The Earl of Pembroke and De Briwere rode over to see that all was duly arranged for the fight.

Three chairs of state were placed for the three Kings. Alphonso of Castile,* John's brother-in-law, being present as a

* Alphonso married Eleanor, John's eldest sister; they were married forty-five years, and died within a few days of each other.

guest of Philip's, was to act as umpire. Early on the morning of the appointed day, De Courcy confessed and received the Holy Sacrament in an adjoining church, and so made the sole preparation in which he interested himself. He rode to the field with his sponsors; and there found an assemblage of all that was fair and brave in the city, besides the crowd of mere sightseers.

The two champions each made a solemn appeal as to the justice of his cause, and protested that he trusted only in God and his sword, using no spells, conjurations, or other devices of the devil. But the French Knight's voice was low, his words rapid and broken; and the English declared that he trembled. De Courcy spoke in a voice deep but clear. He fought, he said, for the honour of England; and maintained that the lands in dispute belonged to the Crown of that kingdom, and not to that of France.

De Courcy had recovered his strength.

His visor was up and his face could be seen, but he looked an elderly rather than a middle-aged man, and the gravity of his face amounted to sadness; still his large frame, his magnificent proportions, and the easy way in which he wore his armour, so that it seemed, in truth, part of himself, made all present entertain a belief, almost amounting to conviction, of his success. Mounted on his favourite war-horse, which had been sent over from Ireland by the King's order, he sat like a statue, save only when he stroked the noble beast's mane, when it pawed the ground, delighted at once again bearing its beloved master to the combat.

The trumpets sounded, the heralds cried, 'Laissez aller, preux chevaliers!' and De Courcy, gently touching his steed with the spur, rushed like lightning at his antagonist; but the French Knight remained motionless, and De Courcy seeing this, gracefully reined his horse back to the starting-point—a manœuvre and an act of

courtesy that raised shouts of applause. Again the trumpets sounded, again De Courcy sprang forward on his steed; and now the French Knight roused himself, he set spurs to his horse. Everyone was breathlessly awaiting the shock of the meeting of the two champions, when, suddenly wheeling his horse round, and plunging the rowels of his spurs deep into his horse's flanks, he cleared the barrier with a bound, and galloped off as though he were pursued by an enemy.

There was a pause for a moment, a dead silence of utter bewilderment. No one seemed able to realize the situation; the French could not believe that their champion had fled; and De Courcy, reining in his steed, a second time disappointed of the shock of war, remained stationary in the midst of the field. Then burst forth a shout of triumph and derisive laughter from the English, and from King John's French subjects; while from the French

themselves came groans, hisses, and execrations.

De Courcy, advancing to the raised daïs where the Kings sat, demanded to have won the day; and the King of Castile allowed the claim, and adjudged the lands and castles in dispute to the Crown of England. King Philip, deeply mortified, had to assent to the decision with as good a grace as he could, and allow the field fairly won; while King John was profuse in his acknowledgments and thanks to De Courcy.

The inevitable banquet had now to be held, at which the victor must be present; but De Courcy had first to free himself from the crowd of knights and nobles that gathered around him to congratulate him: some, old friends with whom he had served in the South of France; others, Norman barons who had now become subjects of France, and many an English knight and noble, all drawn hither to witness the contest.

He received their greetings courteously,

and welcomed old friends cordially, but withal with a gravity and reserve from which all gladness seemed banished. He replied to their congratulations with thanks, adding, however, that, for all he could see, a stone image or a scarecrow would have done as much; in fact, he said, with the only attempt at a smile, and that seemed but a pale and wintry reflection of the sweet and pleasant one that in former days had lighted up his face, he thought it was his gaunt aspect that must have acted as a scarecrow, and frightened away the Frenchman.

He was conducted to King Philip's palace, and received with the honour due to a conqueror: after the feast, when the tables were drawn, the King addressed De Courcy:

'Sir Knight, the cowardice of my champion has robbed us of the pleasure of witnessing and applauding a brave feat of arms; I purpose, therefore, to ask of you a favour. Will you, of your courtesy, give

us a specimen of your prowess in arms, and of the great strength of which we have heard so much ?'

'Sir,' answered De Courcy, 'I am not now as young and lusty as I was, moreover I have been weak and ill; nor should I, if the combat had been fought out, have trusted as much for success to the brute force that God has given me, as to science in arms and skill in using my weapons; but if it will pleasure you, I will give you such proof of my strength as I am able.'

Then he desired an attendant to bring a steel morion or head-piece, and to fill it full of loose pieces of mail, and to set it upon a block of wood. Then as de Courcy laid his hand upon his sword, he turned a fierce look around, that made King John to shrink into himself, angered King Philip, and made the King of Castile to wonder. Suddenly, drawing his sword, he smote the morion, and clave it in two, down to the very crest, and the sword stuck fast in the block, the morion falling away on each side,

and the mail rolling hither and thither on the floor. A murmur of admiration and applause ran round the hall; and King Alphonso, turning to King Philip, said:

'Verily, sir, your champion seems to me to have shown that better part of valour, viz. discretion, in evading the combat, for surely no mortal man could stand against such a stroke as that.'

King Philip desired one of his guards to draw forth De Courcy's sword, which had stuck fast in the block of wood, and return it to him; but he could not, nor could others who made the attempt. Then said King John:

'You alone, sir, can withdraw your sword;' and he drew it out with ease.

The Kings then left their seats, and carefully examined the morion, which, in spite of the opposing force of the loose iron, was cut through as cleanly as a knife cuts through a cheese.

The astonishment, the congratulations that were poured upon De Courcy at this

exhibition of his strength were received by him with a courteous nonchalance, as though the whole thing were an every-day affair, and he was rather *gêned* with the fuss that was made about it. Then Alphonso of Castile said:

'Pardon me, sir, but I would fain ask why you looked around so fiercely before you dealt that mighty blow.'

'Because, Sir King, had I failed, I should have slain ye all—Kings as well as others.'

The Kings looked at each other for a moment in consternation; then it struck them in a ludicrous light, and they burst into a hearty laugh.

'Grammercy,' said the King of Castile, 'we owe our heads, then, to your success; nevertheless, since we feel them well on our shoulders, we thank you.'

'And you, sir,' said Philip, turning to King John, 'would do well to think how you can best pleasure so mighty a champion.'

'Name thy reward, man,' said John; 'and 'whatever it may be, it shall be yours.'

'Then, sir, seeing that you have already granted me again my Earldom of Ulster and Connaught, and I have enough seignories and lands in England, France, and Ireland, I will but ask that I and my descendants, having first made our obeisance, may have the privilege of remaining covered before yourself or any future Kings of England.'

'It is granted,' said the King; 'never vail thy hat again, man, before King or subject.'

As long as John stayed in France De Courcy remained in his lodgings; but no blandishments of King John, or courtesies of the other Kings, could draw him from his retirement, save for a visit he paid to Courcy in Normandy, where he found, as another instance of the injuries inflicted upon him by King John, that the home of his ancestors must pass into the hands of a distant branch of his family, as it was

impossible that a noble could remain a subject of the King of France as well as of the King of England, unless for a fief held of the latter as feudal subject of France.

An occasional visit of ceremony he paid to the French Court, but he moved in it as a being from another sphere—sad, grave, and stately. He spoke to but few, and showed no animation at, and little interest in, what went on, till it was arranged that they should return to England. He went back laden with costly gifts, which he accepted in the same matter-of-course way, though they included Spanish horses, a suit of Spanish mail, tapestries from France, and cups and flagons of rare jeweller's work from England.

On their return he was eager to go to Ile Briwere, to see Miles ; but Sir William persuaded him to travel with him to London, where he assured him that Miles already was. They had scarcely arrived at De Briwere's lodgings before the two

young men burst in, receiving him with the most ardent and passionate delight and congratulation. He asked them how they had sped, and where they had bestowed themselves; and then he learned for the first time the depth of King John's meanness in imprisoning these youths as hostages for his truth.

'And where did he place you? At Windsor, under the care of Queen Isabel?'

'No, father; we occupied the same room that you had, in the Tower.

'Not the dungeon!' said De Courcy hotly.

'No; a room where we had light and food, and each other's company. It was wearisome, but we were thankful to be together.'

De Courcy turned a stern and angry glance upon De Briwere, but Miles added eagerly:

'Father dear, it was no fault of Sir William's; it was the only way. The King has starved to death noble knights and

barons, and think you that we could remain at ease, and let you die, whilst we could have a hand in setting you free? And, father, we do so long to hear the story of your championship.'

'My boy,' answered De Courcy, 'there is nought to tell, but that my wolfish look and gaunt features scared the poor Knight so that he took me for a ghoul, and fled from me lest I should devour him too.' Then De Courcy turned to his nephew and said: 'And you, my boy, stayed as hostage for your uncle, when your brothers, too, had yielded up their lives for my sake. Were you willing that your father's name should be "clean put out"?'

'My brothers died, sir, as became my father's sons, and as owing you a love and duty scarce less than that of sons. For ourselves, neither Miles nor I felt in the slightest danger. We knew that you must conquer, though we guessed not at the prudence or cowardice of the French Knight. For my father's memory, it can

never be forgotten, uncle, while yours lasts; and as to his family being extinguished, that is in God's hands. I heard that my brothers died nobly, though I have never learned the exact manner of their death.'

Then De Courcy told, and for the first time, the tale of the treacherous plot which had so fatally succeeded; he spoke of the noble truth of those who had gathered round to defend him; how, one by one, they fell; and how, even when the brave boys were told that no evil was intended them, they refused to leave him, and save their own lives.

'They fell,' he said, 'at my side; and, clothed in the white garments of penitence, they looked like some holy martyrs, as, bathing my feet with their sweet young blood, their fair hair dabbled in their own gore, they dropped before me. Oh, the pity of it!'

'Nay, nay, uncle! do not grieve for such as they. On such a day, and in such a

cause, they have doubtless won their rest among the martyrs in Paradise; and are walking in white amongst the redeemed. They are with our father, and——' De Courcy put up his hand as if he could bear no more, and De Briwere added:

'With those we love; and their wounds will be as chaplets of jewels in the realms above.'

There was a pause. Perhaps De Courcy was envying those bright boys who had won their crown so early. But at last Miles said:

'Father, we do so long to hear the tale of the championship, and that mighty stroke you made.'

And he was not to be put off. And, as Lady Briwere said, they had earned a right to hear every word. And so, between Sir William de Briwere, who was only too willing to make the most of his friend's achievements; and the eager questions that the lads compelled De Courcy to answer, they heard it all, even

to the strange threat with which he finished.

'Oh, father, did you really say that?'

'I fear me I did, Miles. It was a foolish boast. But yet, methinks, had I known that my boys were kept in durance vile by King John, I should have done it, had I failed.'

'But,' said Lady Briwere, 'was it true, sir, that you struck down thirteen in the graveyard at Doune with nought but a pole?'

'I fear me, madame, that, too, is true; though I counted not their number. But I care not to speak of it; for, unwittingly, it was a fearful sacrilege. The pole was the pole of a cross that I bore in my hands. I trust that I may be forgiven; for I knew not what I did.'

Back again the boys went to what had been done in Paris; but it was difficult to make De Courcy speak of his own deeds; and he passed on to discuss the arrangements for his return to Ireland. And now

it appeared, by messages from the King himself, that the evil deeds of Walter and Hugh de Lacy were becoming unbearable; that Doune, and the whole of Ulster, Meath, and Dublin, were returning to barbarism, and that King John would only be too glad to avail himself of De Courcy's knowledge of the country, his statesmanship and military skill, 'to root out the intolerable kind,' and restore peace, order, and good government.

CHAPTER V.

'L'HOMME PROPOSE, MAIS DIEU DISPOSE.'

KING JOHN furnished De Courcy with full powers, as Lord Deputy of Ireland, to reduce it once more to obedience, to dispossess the De Lacies, and to reinstate himself as Earl of Ulster and Connaught. It was with an ardent desire for a return to active life, after an enforced idleness of so many months, and with a feverish longing once more to be near Elfrica's grave, and once more to revisit the scenes of his happy wedded life, that De Courcy awaited the necessary supplies from the King, and hastened such preparations as he was able to make.

As there was still delay, and De Courcy realized more and more how little he had

in common with those around him, he left the task of collecting men and materials to Sir Nicholas de Tristram and his own son; and determined to spend a short time with his friends, the Abbot and monks, at Chester. It was a peaceful resting-place for self-recollection, and preparation, as he fondly hoped, for beginning his work anew with his beloved son and nephew by his side. But at times the recollection of the vision in the Tower came to his mind, and a foreboding that as one part of the prophetic dream had been fulfilled, and he had been released with honour, that the remaining part would come to pass also, and that he should never see Ireland again.

He told the story to the Abbot, who wisely recommended him not to dwell upon it, but to subdue his own will wholly to his Father's, and to resign himself utterly and entirely into the hands of God. Earnestly did De Courcy strive for this holy frame of mind; and as he sought to attain this

blessed state of submission, he learned more and more how he had been guilty of a blind idolatry in placing the creature before the Creator. He began more and more to look forward to a purer and brighter world, where Elfrica would be by his side again, but where above all he would live in the light of the Father, the Redeemer and the Consoler, the Triune Majesty on High.

The fleet now came round, filled with brave men from the Western Counties; and a gallant ship called the *Champion*, gaily decked with flags and streamers, prepared specially for De Courcy himself, led the way. They crossed the Channel, De Courcy with his staff first; but just as they gained the other side, a thick mist descended on the sea, and the ships were separated in the fog. A few entered Strangford Lough, but the *Champion*, with De Courcy, missed the entrance, and was then beaten back by contrary winds. Again he tried, and the same thing

happened; a third time, and the vessel struck on some rocks. They were obliged to take to their boats, and were picked up by a merchant vessel returning to England with a heavy cargo. Again he found himself at Chester, and now he had to learn a lesson of patient waiting. Another vessel was found, the *Shamrock*. De Courcy thought, it might be, that the boastful name they had given his first ship (though it was none of his doing) had caused his failure. Again they set sail; they had not made a great way when the vessel sprung a leak, and was found to be making water rapidly; again they had to put back.

Messengers came over from Ireland to discover the cause of De Courcy's delay. Short and sharp measures were necessary; the native Irish were swarming under the scarcely less savage De Lacies, and other Norman chiefs who had engrafted the Irish vices on the Norman pride and harshness, and had lost the virtues of both. They had already had some brushes, and although in

each separate encounter the new levies, with their strict discipline and fresh ardour, their magnificent cavalry and proof armour, were sure to win, still it was at the loss of many brave men, and the force would surely waste away.

De Courcy listened eagerly; a strange pang shot through him. Another vessel was sought; he himself took the helm. When the grand outline of Slieve Ban came in sight, his eyes were strained; the vessel danced lightly on the waters, the sails glittered in the sunshine. 'At last,' said De Courcy; but the wind fell, then chopped round, and the vessel was being driven back by a strong breeze. De Courcy had a boat lowered; he leapt into it, but before the men could take to their oars it drifted on a hidden rock, and was stove in, and he regained his vessel with difficulty. Still De Courcy struggled against what seemed fate. Going on shore himself he sent Miles back to Ireland, desiring Sir John Savage to assume the command.

He waited again, but determined now to make the attempt at some other port, though he knew the danger, as he was uncertain what part of the country was in the hands of his enemies. Still, from one cause or another, he failed again and again. Fourteen times had he made the attempt—fourteen times he had failed ; and now, submitting himself wholly to God's will, once more he determined to make the attempt —once only to make this, his last venture ; and if this failed, to give it up for ever.

All night he lay at Chester before the altar of the Holy Trinity whose Majesty he had offended ; earnestly he prayed that once more he might behold Elfrica's grave, and lay his bones by hers ; but his passionate entreaties were now tempered by the soft refrain, ' Thy will be done.'

He resolved now to make the passage in a large open boat. There was a mast, in order to put up a sail if the wind was favourable ; but he determined to trust to the strength of the rowers. For some time

they went on their way prosperously; then a storm arose, sudden and terrible. Black clouds gathered, the darkness was as of night; the only light they had to guide them was from the rapid flashes of the fierce and threatening glare of the vivid lightning. Two of the rowers broke their oars; they could make no way, and they entreated De Courcy to steer back to England or they should all be lost. Still he struggled on. The storm passed before them, and broke over Slieve Donard. Then he saw the fearful danger they were in; the waves dashed and broke against the rocks, and to attempt to land in face of such a gale was hopeless. Their only chance of safety lay in turning back once more. But how could he do it? He had solemnly sworn it should be his last attempt. He *could* not himself steer the vessel away from the Green Isle; so, resigning the rudder to other hands, he stood, holding the mast, his eyes fixed upon the coast, as he bade farewell to the land which had been his home for so

many happy years—for ever and for ever. Sheathed in bright armour, but with head bare, his grey hair blown by the wind, he gave the order to turn back once more; and still no one but himself knew that it was for the last time. Never again in the flesh should he view *that* coast, to which, till now, he had ever returned as to a beloved home. Never again, save in his dreams, would Slieve Ban or Slieve Donard stand up boldly before his eyes as natural defences of the country. Never, never more would he see Doune and St. Patrick's Cathedral. Never, never again would he visit St. Mary's aisles, and kneel by Elfrica's tomb, or gaze on her sweet face as portrayed by the sculptor's skill, and there strive to fit to himself and bear Christ's yoke.

With his eyes bent upon Ireland, he took no heed to the rowers' toil, or the struggle with the furious waves; and as he gazed the storm abated, as though the contest with the unseen Power was over. The

dark clouds gathered round Slieveed Donard, and out of them burst a flame which, playing for a moment around its head, formed a brilliant crown of light.

'Adieu, my own dear land! thou blessed spot that holdest the dust of the two beings that were ever most precious to me on earth: never, never, never may I see thee more! Elfrica, think of me, pray for me, forget me not; dearest, farewell for ever—till——'

The words were but spoken in his heart; no sound broke from his lips but 'Fiat voluntas tua.' Yet his eyes never ceased from gazing till the last cloud-like outline had faded out of sight; then, drawing a deep breath, he said:

'Till death shall ope the gates of life.'

The struggle of De Courcy's life was ended; from henceforth he belonged to another world. He returned to Chester, where, shortly afterwards, Miles followed him. The fight against lawlessness and savagery was too mighty to be carried on

without a reliable leader. De Courcy remained awhile at the monastery which, though never taking the place of Glastonbury or St. Andrew de Stoke in his affections, was now hallowed to him by the sympathy and wise counsels of the good monks. But it was like a ghost of his former self that he passed from cell to cloister, from cloister to church, from church to cell again ; yet it was noticed that De Courcy ever paid his devotions at the shrine of the Holy Trinity rather than at those of saint or martyr, be they never so holy. At one time he thought of entering the monastery as a lay brother, and taking the cowl ; but Miles' earnest entreaties prevented him, and he would not take a step which would have cut him off from his son.

By his father's desire Miles crossed to France, where, holding a commission from King John, under Roger Earl of Chester, Sir Damian's son, he helped to defend the Castle of Roche Andelys. Here they bravely withstood a siege from King Philip

for a whole year; but at the end of that time, provisions failing, Sir Roger addressed his men and advised them to make a sally, to break through the besiegers, and rather to die by the sword than by famine, or allow themselves to wear out their souls and bodies in captivity.

This they did, but in spite of their valiant attempt, they, being spent with hunger and long watching, were taken prisoners; yet were they treated worthily by King Philip, who gave them no narrower prison than the whole city of Paris. Sir Miles, for he had been knighted for his valour, sent word to his father of their condition, and lovingly entreated him to come to France and remain with him. This he consented to do; and so, bidding adieu to his friends at Chester, Sir John de Courcy took ship and sailed for France, where he was hospitably and honourably entertained by King Philip, and lovingly welcomed by his son.

But his spirit was worn out with sorrow

and disappointment, and, save for his son, his heart and affections were wholly set on another world. The approach of Easter was ever to him a time of deep solemnity, and of sad and tender retrospect; but as time passed on, and each one brought him nearer to the great resurrection morning, his grief became more subdued, and gradually passed into loving anticipation of meeting those who had crossed the boundary-line which divides time from eternity before him.

Lent had come again, and he spent it, as ever, in watching, fasting, and prayer; but in a chastened and more sober tone, looking more to the future than the past, which he left in his Father's hand, trusting in His mercy that He would 'in Himself make pure' the life already fled.

But when the Easter morn came, and he did not appear at the early mass, they sought him, and found him with such a look of peace on his worn features, as they had never perhaps worn in life. Elfrica's cruci-

fix was clasped to his breast, and as he lay in the light of the rising morn, with the Easter sun shining brightly on his face, and giving it an unearthly look of glorified joy, they saw that De Courcy was dead, or as the old chroniclers say with more truth, 'that he rested in the Lord.'

* * * * *

It seems necessary to add a few words with regard to those whose careers have been interwoven with that of our hero.

Sir Miles de Courcy returned to England on the accession of Henry III. He laid his claim to the Earldom of Ulster before the council. His right was acknowledged; but as the De Lacies could not have been dispossessed without violence, the Barony of Kingsale was granted to him in compensation: the patent, however, bore date from 1181, when his father was created Earl of Ulster. The present Lord Kingsale still retains the quaint privilege, granted by King John to his illustrious ancestor, of remaining

covered in presence of his sovereign. In the present reign we must suppose it to have been in abeyance, since, according to George III., King John might grant him the privilege to remain covered before his sovereign, but it was impossible to give him the right to do so before a lady. The Lord of Kingsale heads the roll of the Peerage in order of the time of creation, the Barony of Kingsale being the oldest that has descended in an unbroken line to our day; it has continued for more than 700 years.

Sir Nicholas de Tristram was restored to his Barony of Howth, though stripped of some of its possessions. It still remains, like that of Kingsale, to represent in an unbroken line the original possessor, though the family name has been changed from De Tristram to St. Lawrence, from the memory of some valiant deed done in the middle ages by one of the family on St. Lawrence's Day.

The two De Lacies only became the

more insolent from the issue of their struggle with De Courcy. At last their lawlessness and savage ferocity made it necessary for King John himself to interfere. He crossed to Ireland with a fleet, bearing a strong force, to restore, if possible, the supremacy of law and order.

They,* knowing well how they had outraged both, escaped to France, and took refuge in the monastery of Taurin. Even there they were afraid of making themselves known, and for some time they worked at making bricks; but this work proving too hard for these dainty noblemen yet ruffianly knights, they were put to the lighter occupation of working in the garden. Here at last they made themselves known to the Abbot, who, because he had baptized the King's sons, and indeed been godfather to more than one of them, he interceded with the King for them. And so Walter de Lacy, for two thousand five hundred marks, and Hugh de Lacy, for a

* Camden.

great sum of money, paid for their ransom, were restored again to their former degree and seigniories, and to more than was in truth their own, for King John reinstated Hugh de Lacy in the Earldom of Ulster in spite of the promises he had given to Sir John de Courcy and the rights of his son, Miles de Courcy. Hugh de Lacy, in his old age, bore testimony to the self-devotion and dauntless courage of Sir Almeric de Courcy in his last battle. He told how his uncle Cathal O'Connor had described the struggle to him, and said he did not believe that anything equal to it was ever seen before. The English stood back to back, and made prodigious slaughter till by degrees every man fell. They slew one thousand of his men, which amounted to five for every one who fell in that bloody field.

Hugh de Lacy's only daughter married De Burgos' son, and Walter de Burgos and Maude de Lacy became Earl and Countess of Ulster in right of the latter.

Their great granddaughter, Elizabeth de Burgh, married Lionel, Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III.; and their daughter Philippa, by her marriage with Edmund Mortimer, and their daughter Ann's marriage with her cousin Richard, Earl of Cambridge, carried the rights of Lionel's descendants to the Crown into the family of York. Her present Majesty, then, through Elizabeth de Burgh, is descended from the daughter of Roderick O'Connor, the last King of Connaught, and thus unites in her own person the blood of the ancient sovereigns of Ireland with those of Wales, Scotland, and England to the Norman ancestry, from which alone it is customary to trace her genealogy. Walter de Lacy, the elder brother, also left only daughters.

Sir William de Briwere was left by King John's will one of his executors; and we find not only his name but that of his son, another Sir William* de Briwere, summoned

* Or, as some authorities say, Sir Walter.

by the great Earl of Pembroke to Bristol, to consult as to the best means of ridding the kingdom of Prince Louis of France, who was in England when King John died. During the able administration of the great Earl and of Hubert de Burgh, De Briwere seems not to have taken so active a part in public affairs as he had been wont to do, but to have employed his energies in improving and benefiting all the places with which he had property.

The similarity of his name and his son's makes it impossible to disentangle their lives and appropriate to each his share of the good works in which they engaged. He manifested his gratitude to the Kings he served so faithfully by endowing the Hospital of St. John at Bridgewater with funds for the offering of masses and prayers for the souls of King Henry II., Richard, and John, and he seems to have laid upon his son the duty of supporting the reigning sovereign; for we find a De Briwere in the times of Henry III. ever supporting the

King against the vexatious demands of the Barons.

Their names are still remembered in Bridgewater, where, on the site of the Hospital of St. John, stands the beautiful modern church which bears the same name. Of another religious house, the monastery of the Grey Friars, one gateway still stands; while the bridge, begun by the second William de Briwere, but not finished till the time of Edward I., still stands to attest the way that our forefathers built. There seems to have been a second son, who strangely enough also bears the name of William de Briwere, who was Bishop of Exeter in Henry III.'s time. He claimed relationship with King John, probably through his mother, Beatrix de Valle.*

The second Sir William de Briwere appears to have died without children, his large possessions being divided among his

* Prince, in his 'Worthies of Devon,' speaks of him as of noble birth, but family unknown.

four sisters. Alice marrying her father's late ward, Sir Reginald Mohun of Dunster, carried to him the manor of Ile Briwere.

Falkes de Breauté did but increase in wickedness as time went on; but during the vigorous administration of Hubert de Burgh his iniquities were at last punished, though scarcely as they deserved. His crowning act of violence and insolence was entrusting the Castle of Bedford to his brother William, who actually arrested and imprisoned the royal Judges who were inquiring into his misdeeds. De Burgh besieged Bedford and took it; he hanged the whole garrison, including William de Breauté.

Falkes was banished, and in spite of his cause being advocated by many of the Barons, and also a letter being written in his behalf by the Pope, he remained an outlaw; nor did he ever return to the county where he had wrought so much of evil. Alice his wife being childless—for the little Lucie had faded away—had

no link to bind her to her worthless husband; she applied, therefore, for a divorce, which she obtained on the plea of never having consented to her first marriage. She lived henceforth upon her dower, as Countess of Devon and Wight.

REGINALD, KING OF MAN, was opposed in his kingdom by his younger and half-brother Olave. After De Courcy's imprisonment and death, Olave appears to have become more formidable; and Reginald, to secure his crown, made a surrender of it to the Pope, and became vassal of the King of England in 1219. He was, however, at last killed in battle by Olave, February 14, 1230.

The final career of those who had been associated in life with De Courcy having been sketched, it remains but to draw a moral from the life of the great hero himself.

His life was a failure—his death unnoted! Was his work therefore thrown away? Nay, for honest work for God's

sake is never profitless, and to few indeed is it given, like our great Alfred, to realize the fruit of their labour. To many, perhaps to most, is given either not to live to see the completion of their work, or, as in the case of St. Louis, Edward I., the Black Prince, and Henry V., either to live so long as to see their life's work undone, or for it to crumble to pieces the moment the master's hand is withdrawn.

It is not here that we must hope to see the fruit of our labour. Did not (and we say it with all reverence) the Blessed Redeemer conquer through apparent failure? From how many, since then, has gone up the bitter cry wrung from the heart well-nigh broken by disappointment: 'But we trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.' If well-nigh nineteen centuries have passed, and our Lord's work is yet incomplete, can we fret because our puny efforts are not always successful, because to most of us is accorded an unfinished work, an incomplete picture—an

unrealized ideal! Let us be content if we can say, 'We have fought a good fight, we have finished our course, we have kept the faith,' and leave the result in higher hands.

Still is John de Courcy's work unfinished, for still is Ireland a sore and a disappointment—a problem yet awaiting solution. Let this tale end with the maxim which has been alluded to before, and which has rung in the author's ear, like a refrain of sweet music, since it was quoted at the Medical Congress of 1881:

'The day is short, and the work is great; the reward also is great, and the Master presses. It is not incumbent on thee to finish thy work, but thou must not therefore cease from it.'

And we must not cease from it; for if not in Time, yet in Eternity De Courcy's motto will prevail, and at the last—

'The Truth shall conquer all things.'

THE END.

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